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The Angel in the Flame



Charles J. Little

The Angel in the Flame

Sermons Preached at Evanston, Ill.
in the First Methodist Episcopal Church

By

CHARLES J. LITTLE, A. M.

PRESIDENT OF GARRETT BIBLICAL INSTITUTE

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I.

THE ANGEL IN THE FLAME.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. . . . God called to him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. . . . Moreover he said I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."—Ex. iii, 2, 4, 6.

EVERY child that hears the story of Moses feels its charm. The mother's anxiety and cunning are set off so sharply against the rush of the river that flows on heedless of the baby born to meet such danger and such destiny, the baby whose life is to be more fruitful to the world than the spring floods of the Nile have ever been to Egypt and the East. The eager sister choking back her fears and tears is blended so graciously by her passionate affection with the high-souled princess whose flash of impulse

to rear the little one becomes a royal purpose at Miriam's passionate pleading.

Even a child feels the thrill of divinity that plays about these women's hearts and learns easily the first great lesson in the chapter of God's Providence; to wit, that wonders are wrought through hands that plait and cover baskets, through eyes that watch for the coming of help, through brains that think quickly the right thought, and tongues that speak bravely and promptly the right word. Children, though, are slower to learn that human lives are not shaped in a few minutes, like the toys made for you in the glass works while you look on; and slower still to learn that human lives are shaped from within as well as from without. Mother and sister, princess and priest, the traditions of Israel, the learning of Egypt, the blaze of God in the burning bush might all be, and surely were, quite powerful in the making of Moses. But, after all, Moses, like every other whole number in God's arithmetic, must work at his own destiny and help to shape his own soul. It is well to distinguish between the critical moments and the supremely decisive moments of a man's life. The commonest human history may have many critical moments, but the mightiest of human careers has but one supreme moment. As a rule, the critical

moments in a great career lead up step by step to the decisive moment in which Divine and human meet, and in which the issues of life are determined. Now the vision that Moses saw on the edge of the desert was the supreme moment in his life, the decisive moment of his world-shaping career. It was to him what the vision on the plain of Damascus was to Saul of Tarsus, what his discoveries in the Psalms and in the Epistles of Paul were to Martin Luther, what the revelation of an approaching moral conflict in American history was to Abraham Lincoln. As the soul bears itself in these supreme instants, so is the soul's career and so is the human destiny in which the soul, confronted by the vision, is appointed and accredited to act as an agent of the living God.

In discussing this supreme moment in the life of Moses, let me bring before you as vividly as I can—

I. MOSES AS WE MUST CONCEIVE OF HIM BEFORE THE VISION.

II. THE VISION ITSELF AS A REVELATION OF JEHOVAH'S LIFE AND LOVE, AND A PREPARATION FOR HIS MISSION.

I. Moses, so runs the earliest narrative, was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. From the speech of Stephen we

learn that he was already in his eightieth year. From the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that his deliberate choice to stand in with the God of his fathers and with the enslaved people of Israel was made when he came to years of discretion. From the speech of Stephen we learn that he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by His hand would deliver them; but they understood not. And in the same speech we are told that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The shepherd, therefore, who is leading his flock to the edge of the desert is not a stripling, not a stalwart lad full of wild enthusiasms, but a mature man of strange and sad experiences. He handles his shepherd's crook as if it were a scepter, and moves before his flock with the bearing of a Pharaoh. His eyes as he scans the horizon are full of fire and strange yearning; his brow is lined with the marks of deep questions yet unanswered; his mouth is firm, yet his lips quiver and his nostrils dilate as though he were shaken with strange expectations, tantalizing him with their vagueness and their distance. As he watches alternately the flocks of sheep behind him and the flakes of cloud above him, we see that we have before us one of those rare natures that stoop divinely to the lowest of tasks, yet are full

of "the thoughts that wander through eternity." The shepherd thinker of the land of Midian, the son-in-law of priest Jethro and the son of Pharaoh's daughter;—we need no fancy to tell us that his thoughts are full of nightly conversations between him and the wise Jethro under the open sky.

"My father, thou art thy people's priest. Tell me what dost thou know of the Invisible? Hast thou any news? In Egypt there were many gods and ranks of gods; temples and ceremonies; memorials and mummies; the streets were full of deities and sacred animals; but I walked an alien and a stranger among them all. Once only I paused and trembled, for beneath a veiled goddess I read the words, 'I am what has been and what shall be hereafter, and no mortal hand can lift my veil.' The words seemed to awaken in me the teaching of my mother and the traditions of the elders of my people. For they told of One who called our father Abraham and made the promise to him. Father Jethro! Thou too art descended from Abraham, for is not the tribe of Midian the offspring of Hagar's son? Tell me, are there among thy people no traditions of the older time; is there nothing to tell me how I may find Him?"

"My son, be comforted!" so I hear the priest of

Midian answer. "One story lingers among our people that may quiet thy troubled heart. When Hagar the mother of our race was put forth by Abraham, she cast her child Ishmael under the shrubs just as thou wert cast by thy mother among the reeds of the great river. And she cried, 'Let me not see the death of my child.' As she lifted up her voice and wept she heard one calling to her: 'What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not! Lift up the lad, for I will make of him a great nation.' And as she opened her eyes she saw a well of water, and she knew that her child was saved. And here we are a great tribe according to the promise made to Hagar in the wilderness."

"O my father Jethro! If the God of Hagar and of Jacob would but appear to me! My father, the stars above us are but small points that glitter in the deep dark blue, and yet my heart is heavy with their magnitude, when trees and mountains and meadows and desert seem to dwindle away under the stretches of the sky. O my Father! if He, the Unnameable, the Invisible, would but bow these heavens and come down. I too have lifted up my voice like Hagar. I have wept and I have shouted. But for my answer I have swallowed my own tears and the echoes of my own wild cry where-with I broke the long watches of the night. Father

Jethro! The Unnameable has not heard me; or if He has heard, He will not answer me."

"My Son," I hear the Wise One answer, "the longing within thee so deep, so strong, is truly the voice of the Invisible. I can tell thee but little more. Our worship here is rude and mixed with habits borrowed from our neighbors even wilder than ourselves. But my Son, stay not to stretch out thy hand and continue the voice of the crying! Thou art chosen for a mighty destiny! Wait and watch and listen! The Mighty One will yet appear."

But another burden rested (so our records tell us) on the soul of Moses. He had expected to deliver Israel, and Israel had rejected or refused to know him. Had he, after all, not mistaken his mission? Might it not have been wiser to have accepted the title, the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Was not his choice, after all, the blunder of impulsive and unworldly youth, that fancies the straight line to be the shortest distance to a great purpose? What if he had not escaped from Egypt? What if, instead of the mad task of rescuing his own people, he had chosen to soften their lot and to blend all that was noble in their religious traditions with the teaching of the Egyptian priests, and thus had transformed and saved two nations instead of one? What

thought more natural? But what thought could be more tormenting? No vision of God! No task accomplished! Great opportunities lost; nothing left of all he hoped for but a mighty hunger of the heart! Ay! that's the thing! Blessed, indeed, is he that hath the mighty hunger of the heart! For him the burning bush shall blaze, for him the heavens shall bend and break with the visions of God! These are days, I know, in which it is hardly good form to be overmuch in earnest about Jehovah. Yonder lad talks jauntily about Him as I used to hear the youth of my time talk jauntily about the governor whose only function was to keep things going. We may grow wild about a new fashion in gowns, or in literature, about a new song or a new picture; we may have our enthusiasms for culture or for society, or for humanity; but to take God seriously? How vulgar! How absurd!

Well! I am not talking to you, my flippant lad; or to you either, my flippant lassie. Nor am I talking wholly to yonder eager youth with a great ambition in his soul and hot hunger in his heart. No! I am talking to men like myself, to whom as age creeps on apace, and disappointments come in clusters, the question starts up sharp, imperative, insistent: Was the choice of my youth a wise one? Were the ideals

of early manhood touched with real celestial fire? Were the promises that lured me forward the realities of the future, or only the shadows of a great desire? I am talking to women who staked their all upon the eternity of love and the coming of the visions of God, and now sit watching, though disappointed, clasping their dead hopes to their aching hearts and asking me with their hungry, silent eyes, Yes! Yes! I hear the promise of His coming; but where, where is He? For you I have a bit of glorious news. That hunger of the heart has been in all ages the herald of His coming. He has been found of them who seek Him, whose hearts are in a glow of longing for Him, through whose thoughts there thrill the currents of perpetual desire.

“Why does the lightning strike the wires of the telegraph and telephone?” I asked the other day, and this was the answer: “If there is no electric current in the wire, the lightning will *not* strike it. But when there is a current of low potential in the wire the lightning of high potential, of which the clouds and sky are full, seeks that of low potential, and therefore flows and flashes through the wire.” And so! I said, as I pondered a greater problem, so it must be with the eternal God, with the life of Almighty Power and Love. He leaps to the soul in

which there thrills and throbs a longing for Him. The glow of earnest thought, the current of eager expectation, the alternating rush of doubt and faith vibrating in mind and heart and soul make it possible for God to blend our being with His own and to make us partakers of His nature.

II. But the form in which Jehovah came to Moses is quite as significant as the moment of His appearance. The vision is a twofold revelation; it discloses a being, it imposes a task. It makes plain to Moses what Jehovah is; but it makes plain also what Jehovah expects and requires of him, and thereby fixes the limits of all appearances of God. For be assured it is no true vision of Him that leaves His image meaner than it was before, that calls you to empty praises and to empty dreams, and not to living duties and to lasting achievements, to efforts and to enterprises that tax your utmost energies, that strike their roots into eternity and bear immortal fruit.

Now in this vision of God that came to Moses two things are specially noteworthy. First, the glory and beauty of the symbol; secondly, the personal relation established between Jehovah and his eager servant. Mark you, I am not now concerned with proving that the vision was real and true. I am tell-

ing you just exactly what it was. In doing that, however, I expect to prove its reality and truth, just as if I handled sunbeams with a prism, I should show you something that no man had made.

Take the symbol, first of all, old, familiar, worn-out almost with centuries of use. The bush that burns and is not consumed! Pause and remember that you are meeting this image of the eternal God for the first time in human literature. Our German ancestors had something like it in the tree Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence, which had its roots deep down in the caverns of death, its trunk reaching up heaven-high, and its boughs spreading over the whole universe. At the foot of the tree sat the three fates—the Past, the Present, and the Future—watering its roots from the sacred well. But in the vision of Moses how clear and definite is the revelation of an only and a personal God! How clear, too, the anticipation of what is now the accepted truth of physical science, that the energy of God, though always expended in nature and in history, is never consumed and never destroyed. Strange! When men read in Shakespeare the weird saying of Hamlet about the indestructibility of matter they break out in wonder and exclaim, How admirable a genius! How divine an intellect so to anticipate the pathway

of scientific discovery! But how pitiful the words of Hamlet are! Alexander returned to dust; the dust is earth; of the earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

"Imperious Cæsar dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away!"

This is mean and sordid and depressing. But the vision of Moses, the symbol in which Jehovah revealed Himself through Moses to mankind, is sublime, uplifting, invigorating; a symbol of unwasting power, a symbol of eternal consolation. Yet because we have been familiar with it from our childhood we seldom think of what it means; we do not see that it is the long-ago anticipation of the highest reach of modern thought, the flaming symbol of the indestructible energy that bathes the stars and generates all forms of life.

Did Moses recognize this range of meaning? Hardly. Great discoverers never know the fullness of their findings. Columbus, Newton, Galvani—how the modern world would daze them with surprise! Great prophets likewise never know the fullness of their revelations; scant indeed would be their interpretations of their dreams and visions. No

Scripture is of private interpretation; God's messages belong to humanity, and it requires the whole mind of man to sound their depths. Jesus heard in the words of Jehovah that which escaped the ear of Moses. "That is not there!" exclaimed a celebrated German poet as he listened to a marvelous reading of one of his own poems. "That is not there!" And so Moses might say to Jesus discovering life and immortality in the words that he recorded. For his mind was fixed upon a single point—the discovery of God. How he interpreted the bush to himself, I do not know. I doubt if he bothered about the nature of the Voice that spoke to him, or bewildered himself with idle speculations. The bush blazed; the Voice called. It burned in his brain until from Pisgah's top he fell into the arms of God, and heard again that same Voice calling, "Moses! Moses!" And thus it remained for him the symbol of Jehovah's living presence; the credential of his mission; the confirmation of the covenant made with his ancestors; the assurance of his people's deliverance and glorious destiny. Beyond this he did not go. For us, however, the symbol has a deeper meaning. Or rather it has been replaced by two greater ones, our modern conception of the ever-changing, never-diminished Energy of the uni-

verse, and the revelation of an ever-dying, ever-living Christ.

We have learned as the ancients hardly dreamed the unity and the indestructibility of the energy that sustains and maintains an ever-blazing world. What was burned upon the brain of Moses by a flash of Divine revelation is burned into our brains by daily applications of the same truth. The sunbeams break with it into our spectroscopes; the wires quiver with it as they speed the news from shore to shore; our lamps shine with it, the air palpitates with this unconsumed, stupendous Power. In the whole wide world in Moses' day was there only one bush ablaze with God? O! no. You must not read it wrong. There was doubtless many another bush. But there was only one Moses who had eyes to see and ears to hear. And so with this mighty and majestic symbol of God's presence! Who pauses long enough to see? Who turns aside to listen?

And then, again, this symbol seen by Moses has been replaced by the tree on which Christ died. For there He hangs the Lord of Life and Glory, a perpetual sacrifice, but a perpetual Power. For us He is always dying, yet for us He always lives. Men and women gather about this lifeless tree, this ever-dying Man, and in Him find the secrets of everlast-

ing peace, of Divine comfort, of overmastering strength, of swift and certain resurrection. Still the mockers pass Him by and wag their heads and mutter: "How can He save others? He who could not save Himself!" But the little children praise Him, and the aged victor laying down his warfare turns to Him for his reward; and stalwart men beset with sharp temptations look to Him for strength, and loving women seeking new beauty for their homes and for the world in which they live find Him the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. In His name men and women rally to enterprises of lovingkindness; in His name ministries of mercy struggle with disease and misery. And where His voice is heard and understood the old earth smiles a sweeter welcome to the coming generations, and the old stars gleam with promises of immortality and glad reunion. Jesus the Life and Light of men! Eternally crucified! Eternally alive!

But let us return to Moses and to his interpretation of the vision. What thrilled him, and what after all these centuries thrills us, is the personal cry, "Moses, Moses!" This offer of personal intimacy between God and man is the heart of Jewish and of Christian faith; the ringing, imperative, thrilling voice that cries, Abraham! Moses! Samuel! David!

Saul! The faith of the world has been kept alive by the men who have this vivid and unwavering sense of the Divine urgency. Not by the saints of the Bible only, or the saints of the calendar. There are others also, renowned and unrenowned—Bernard and Bunyan and Blandina and Florence Nightingale and Luther and Pascal and Edwards and Wesley and Fliedner, and a glorious company whose names are known to the recording angel only. These have known that they believed in God and have looked for His appearing; but they have known a thing more glorious, that God believed in them, believed in them in spite of defects and narrowness. The strength of such a vision lies just there; not merely in God's appearing, but in His trusting one with a task, in His singling one out for some fine enterprise. We imagine that we must be always finding God; salvation comes with the discovery that God is seeking us. The majesty of Him, the vastness of His dominion, the sweep of His intelligence, the eternity of His being,—these are overwhelming. There is awful meaning in the words, *No man can see My face and live*. But when in some unexpected hour, after a fierce temptation or a bitter disappointment or a frustrated undertaking or a long and weary waiting the still small Voice

calls one by name as He called Moses, and offers one an opportunity or illuminates a duty, then one knows that the Redeemer liveth. Then one knows that one's way is not hid from the Lord in the multitude of His doings.

Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. How splendid the paradox of the Seen-Unseen! Great indeed was the Divine demand; it staggered the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But the vision that came along with it was proportioned to this demand. It merged the past and the future into one overpowering and commanding present urgency; and although the splendor was of Him that hid His face in mercy, it was for all that a strengthening splendor that made the beholder of it triumphant beyond all expectations. And when the vision faded (as all visions do) the Ever-living replenished the eyes of His Beloved with new fragments of His imperishable beauty. Think you, my brothers and my sisters, think you that God is the God of the ancients only, that He has vanished from this later world? No! as the Lord Jehovah liveth, No! He is not the God of the dead, even though their names be Moses and Isaiah and Paul. Or think you that He has no vision or no task for you because your path is not the path of the mighty? Know you not that with God there

is no great and no small ; that it is better to sing the song of a little bird and to sing it aright, than to attempt the strain of a seraph and to sing it awry ? Miracle of miracles ! God is never far from any one of us. Here in this house of worship, out doors under the open sky ; in the closet when you cry to Him in secret ; at the fireside with the children ; at the bedside when you wrestle with death for your beloved ; in the rush of business and the cares of the world ! Search the heavens for proof of His power, search the horizon for signs of His presence, search your soul for indications of His will, search your surroundings for opportunities to do the will of Him who placed you where you are ! Rest not content until the bush shall burn for *you* and the stars echo with His voice calling *you* by name and sanctifying your intentions and your undertakings. Does He call Himself the God of your fathers ? Then cherish the traditions that He sanctions and glorifies by calling Himself their God ; and when He appears to you do bravely the thing that He commands. For the commands of God are opportunities ; and every noble task completed in His name hallows His name to His children, enlarges the soul of the doer, and increases the joy of the world.

II.

EASTER SUNDAY.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not a God of the dead, but of the living.”—Matt. xxii, 29-31.

I. “THE virtues of many,” says Pericles in the most beautiful of Greek orations, “ought not to be endangered by the management of any one person, to whose uncertain speech their renown may be intrusted.” With such a feeling I approach the discussion of the topic which the Easter festival invites us to consider. The faith of many ought not to be endangered by my poor management; the hopes of many ought to have some solider support than my best reasonings and my purest diction. What pledge

can I give you that I will not put you off with glittering phrases, with pictures plausible and vaguely beautiful, with deft appeals to your memories of sorrow, with arguments the strength of which I hardly dare to test? Do you remember Uhland's beautiful poem of the traveler who crossed the river the waves of which murmured memories of other days? Do you remember the weird charm of the closing lines?

"Take, O Boatman, thrice thy fee, . . .
Spirits twain have crossed with me!"

Well! There 's my pledge! I stand not here alone. The shadows of those I have loved and seemed to lose surround me. Yesterday they emerged from the horizon, look where I might; they beckoned to me across the lake, and then melted into the distant sky like the clouds that formed and faded as I watched. My thoughts are neither deep nor wonderful; I have no song to sing; no pinions to bear me into realms of poetic splendor; I have only the thoughts of a stricken man who knows the meaning of an empty chair and the darkness of grief. And yet I understand the words of Browning:

"Never may I commence my song,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand,
That still despite the distance and the dark,
What was again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendor once thy very thought,
Some benediction, anciently thy smile."

For when one talks of immortality one is fain to hear the foot-falls of the invisible company, fain

“To see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

2. The Sadducees said there is no resurrection! It seems strange to us who crave immortal life that any one should try to prove a thing like that. Was it doubt or dread that made them wish for an unbroken and eternal sleep? Dread, I fancy, rather than doubt. And this dread was a thoroughly logical dread. We are here. Some wind of fate or will of God has brought us hither. Why should not some wind of fate or will of God carry us elsewhither? And is the present life so great a boon that we should desire one hereafter? And are we sure that another existence would be a better one? Did you ever consider that old pre-Christian world long enough and carefully enough to understand this horror of the future?

3. It does the flippant talker (whose name is legion) no injury to be reminded that he can not prove a negative. This life to any one that thinks seriously is an awful mystery; it may be only the beginning of a series. This Sadducean complacency of denial is as shallow as it is arrogant. It may be,

after all, impossible to shuffle off this coil of conscious being. Once alive (who knows?) we may be alive forever. We may be eternal prisoners in the scheme of things; the forces that created us may insist upon our stay. We may turn our telescopes to the star-lined avenues of space and murmur to ourselves, "What corridors and cells await us in this splendid dungeon? What possibilities of individual woe, what depths of social misery and varieties of pain?"

4. The Oriental's shudder at the thought of a future life came from his atheism, or from his degraded conception of God. The Sadducean's dread of it came from his utter worldliness. The Oriental had no knowledge, or a vague one, of the loving, eternal, and Almighty Father, and without this the prospect of eternal life has far more terror than enchantment. The Sadducee had created for himself a screen to hide Jehovah from his eyes; he was wholly unwilling to shape his conduct by the severe standards that the thought of an eternity with God requires. It is just here that practical and theoretical atheism meet—in their shrinking away from immortality.

5. It is curious, though, to note what capers the Sadducean skepticism cuts. "Master, Moses said."

Moses! They hope to conquer by the name of one long dead; they give immortality to the will of a mortal who has dwindled into dust in order to strengthen their denial of immortality. The right to make a will, said an old Roman lawyer, is the right to be immortal. And surely there is something sublime even in this kind of future life. In a Moses who reappears wherever bondage reappears and who legislates whenever God incorporates His will in human statutes. Yet the Moses to whom these Sadducees appealed is Moses minimized. He is not the leader that talked face to face with God and proclaimed His eternity; but the practical legislator dealing with the drudgeries and more commonplace relations of social order. And these arrogant worldlings who are ready to give an eternal efficacy to the transient edicts of the founder of their commonwealth have no mind and no heart for the truths, especially the one supreme truth of Jehovah's perpetual presence, which that commonwealth was established to reveal and to enthrone.

6. "They have caught the Galilean now!" exclaims the excited crowd. But how majestically the Galilean answers! No jest, no cunning, no stooping to their lead; not even irony. "What do you know of Moses?" is the calm reply. "What do you

know of the record that he made?" Moses! Are you looking for him in the petty details of domestic legislation? Look for him at the burning bush, and hear him talk with God! And what do you know of God that you come thus with the trivial requirements of your social order to bind them like fetters upon His almighty arms? First you dwarf Moses, and then you dwarf Jehovah; and having made them petty beings like yourselves, you summon them to tell us that there is no resurrection.

7. The revelation to the Hebrews had a double character; it revealed Jehovah as the builder of a commonwealth in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; but it revealed Him as choosing and loving persons. How many He called as He called Abraham, I do not know. Abraham answered; so did Moses and John and Paul; so have men and women answered in different ages and in divers lands. I can not but think of God as searching everywhere for souls to comprehend and do His will. As fast as He discovers such willing agents He reveals to them all that the measure of their minds will contain. And this personal intimacy of God with His children is the chief end for which He controls the world. Our Heavenly Father is indeed

the builder of commonwealths, but these are but the instruments of a larger purpose which is the salvation of His children. His commonwealths are transient; His personal love is eternal. Israel, Assyria, Athens, Rome crumble to dust that enriches the world; but Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Paul, Jesus—these abide forever. Nations in His hands are instruments of education; it is not, however, the schoolhouse, it is the scholar that He loves; it is not the apparatus or the laboratory, but the learner that He holds in His eternal thought.

8. The resurrection of the dead, so argues Jesus, was implicitly revealed in Jehovah's first appearance to Moses. The new commonwealth was founded upon His personal affection for Abraham; but it was founded not for Abraham or his posterity, but for humanity. And when the Father's love for His human children could be effectually revealed in Jesus, the end of the Jewish commonwealth, then the commonwealth itself had fulfilled its purpose and might be broken up. This implicit revelation was converted into plain and positive expression very slowly, because there were so few in Israel whose obedience lifted them to the plane of insight and of open vision. But the implicit truth lay open to be discovered, just

as the laws of motion were hidden in the movements of a chariot or a planet long before the days of Galileo and of Newton.

9. The implicit reason for immortality, says Jesus, is not in man, but in God; only in the constitution of man so far as that reflects the purpose of God—His divinity, His power, His unfailing love. Herein the revelation of God in the Bible differs from all other thought of Him. And because of this it still shapes and purifies the religion of the Western World. How shall we get the gods under? Such is the problem of Paganism, the paganism of antiquity, and the paganism that usurps the throne of Christ. How shall we coax, how shall we compel the gods to do our bidding? But the problem of true faith, whether of Abraham or Paul, of Bernard or Livingstone, is, What will God have me to do? And directly these souls appear, obedient to His call and eager to comprehend His purpose, He lifts them to a knowledge of that love from which neither life nor death can separate them.

10. We are immortal, therefore, not because we wish it, but because God wills it. Our wishes are indeed intimations of His purpose growing stronger as our likeness to Him grows. Those whom God loves, live. They must. He can not forget them.

He can not and will not bury them out of His mind, and for Him to think of them with love is to perpetuate their being. Therefore it happens that those in whom this sense of God's personal love is deepest and strongest expect most confidently to awake in His likeness, even though they worry but little about it. Their intercourse with God is so sweetened with humility that it is quite enough for them to be His children, and it is only when challenged that they proclaim themselves heirs also, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Only when buffeted and challenged do they care to assert that they who do the will of God abide forever.

II. Our wishes are only intimations of His will. "Hold me tight, Docksie," said the dying Scotch lassie to Dr. Maclure, "and Mither'll tak me oot of your arms." I will not urge the argument too far; but the absence of a revelation to the contrary gives to such hopes and expectations a solemn significance. "If it were not so I would have told you." Has a loving God cheated the noblest of His children with the hope of immortality? True, we may not say to Him, "Thou hast made me, now keep me alive and make me happy for ever and ever." But He might say to us: "Children, cherish no delusions. Make the most of the life that now is; you will never see

another world." He has not said it. And those who live as though He had, darken the face of the sky and deepen the sorrows of humanity; except in those regions (and there are such regions) where the belief in immortality has been degraded to a scourge.

"Thou madest life of man and brute,
Thou madest death, and lo! thy foot,
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die,
And Thou hast made him; Thou art just."

If (this is surely the meaning of Jesus), if there were no place for you among the mansions of My Father, He would have disclosed it more plainly and more distinctly than He has disclosed to you the movements of the stars. We have indeed no claim to another existence; but from a good God we may claim frank speech and simple truth. If this life ends all, why is it not marked as plainly upon our souls as it is upon our nerves and flesh and bones? Then we would shape our conduct to the actual conditions; then knowing that the triumphs of love are brief and the joys of mortals but few, we would gather them quickly and swallow them eagerly. Then we would bury our dead out of sight—and out of mind.

But now! I look out upon the stars that watch me silently until their silence melts to music and the skies grow soft with sympathy as a Voice emerges from the immeasurable deep saying, "If it were not so I would have told you; do not sorrow as though you had no hope!"

12. It is in this sense that I consider the constitution of the human mind, the mandates of the conscience, the expectations of imperishable love, an argument and a prophecy of immortality. I can not think of God permitting His obedient children to be cheated by implications that make rational life impossible. For that is not a rational life over which hover delusions and false expectations.

13. Some one, perhaps, suggests that illusions like these are necessary to the education of the race. Progress from partial error into more perfect truth, I grant you, is not cheating. We are not cheated when the movements of the planets at first conceal the truth that they subsequently reveal; seeing that the truth is always there for the patient discoverer. Nor are we cheated when our belief in the future takes forms that are diviner, sublimer than those our fathers cherished. This is indeed the education of humanity and the revelation of God.

But that God constitutes man so that even in his

ruin he searches for his Father's face; that God entices him with outward displays of power and beauty, and urges him by inward impulses to search the distant spaces and to detect the thoughts that shape the universe; that God crowns him with a conscience that commands him to die for truth and righteousness, and then lays him serenely away into everlasting nothingness—that seems to me a blasphemy.

14. Nor can I understand those thinkers who in the vastness and wealth of nature find reasons for the littleness and insignificance of man. To me it is a fool's objection that this planet is too small for God's attention; as if the size of a globe fixed its place in the government of God or determined for Him the value of the beings for whom He shaped it to a home. In the presence of this vast display of life and force and form I take new heart and hope. What do I care for your objections based all of them upon *your* inability to think the problem out? The resurrection does not depend on your ingenuity and your power. Your incredulity is only the confession of your limitations. For in view of all these wonders, why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead?

15. Conscience bids me defy death and pain and poverty; it bids me defy the fashions of the world

and shape my conduct to eternal standards. The Christian conscience bids me bear myself as a citizen of an immortal commonwealth, carrying with me a princely courage and a princely hope. This Christian conscience has developed along with the belief in the living Christ who conquers death. It commands me for love of Him to wait and work for a vision that will come only after I am deaf to human praise and my eyes have crumbled to inorganic dust. It commands me for love of Him to die rather than to pollute my soul or to surrender my ideals of truth and righteousness. Even though this urging of His children to the obedience of the Cross implied no promise on the Father's part, even though these children had a love so perfect that it cast out all expectation, so that they served without thought of reward, can we imagine a loving God decreeing their extinction in the moment that they most resembled Him? Is He so rich in those that freely do His will and so poor in dust and ashes, that He prefers to be God of the dead rather than the God of the living?

16. I might stop here; you might go home rejoicing and repeating the words of Jesus as you go, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." For Jesus knew Him, and had a right to speak for Him. But this is Easter Sunday, the day that marks

God's greatest condescension to His troubled and doubting children—the day that by its memories illuminates the mysteries by which we are enfolded, Jesus was not satisfied to proclaim the resurrection; he enacted it.

God who made our minds and shaped our consciences, who surrounded us with a framework of nature and of society so magnificent as to make it impossible for us after we had discovered Him to plan our lives upon a petty scale; God sent His Son to tell us what and who we may become—children of God perfected in His likeness. God who at sundry times and divers places has so controlled the common order of the world as to get very close to those who were seeking for Him; God who has often chosen willing souls for enterprises of loving kindness commensurate in their grandeur to the scale of His creation and supported them with His unfailing energy—is it so wonderful that this God should surprise all nations with the resurrection of His Son? Is not a supernatural event like this a natural thing for God? Surely there was no better way to beget us to a lively hope; and the reception of the proclamation, “The Lord is risen indeed,”—the recognition that because He lives we shall live also, reinstate us in our self-respect. For when we measure ourselves

against the universe and against the ages, we seem to be but specks and flashes upon the background of the immensities and eternities. But the revelation that we are objects of so vast a love lifts us to

“An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams.”

Our conversation is in heaven. We are companions of Jesus Christ, who rose from the grave not merely to be a splendid shadow flitting across a distant century, but a living Presence above us and within us. Above us as He lived for Stephen; within us as He lived in Paul; above and about us as He lived to John, the New Jerusalem building itself before him, as his soul expanded to the image of his risen Lord.

Sing your Easter anthems then; rejoice, again, I say rejoice. But remember that you must rise with Christ; not in the great day of His appearing only, but here and now, that you may learn to look, as He did, at the unseen things, the things that are eternal, the chief of which is the God of the living who raised Jesus from the dead.

III.

FAITH.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Heb. xi, 1.

FAITH as a basis of human activity is like land redeemed from the sea; the winds and the waves begrudge the invader his home and assail it with a spiteful constancy. The dikes he builds will not watch and mend themselves; and if he is not eternally vigilant the savings of a lifetime may be swallowed up by the inpourings of a night. But as we fight for everything worth having, why should we not fight for our faith? May not the fierceness of the battle be a warrant for the value of the prize? May not the energy developed in the struggle be an ample reward for its anxieties and its hardships? At any rate the faith described in the text and illustrated in the splendid pictures that follow was just such a hard-won basis of human activity. The men and women depicted by the writer were not having a holiday; the scenes in which they appear are not

the scenes of a comedy ; the sounds that reach us are not the sounds of music and dancing. Here is life grim and desperate ; action energetic, difficult, heroic ; here is conflict, endurance, tribulation, triumph, defeat, death !

And why should we inheritors of their conflicts be wishing for an easy time ? For a God so manifest that there can be no trial of our faith ? For a God so present to our senses and so lavish of victory that our souls might fall into decay or disorder for want of use or be puffed into arrogance by prosperity ? These words of the text mean just what they say. The real world is the invisible world ; the future is more than the present. There is evidence and substance for both ; but the evidence of the Unseen, the substance of the future, is within us. It is our faith ; not fancy, or conjecture, or credulity ; not vision nor knowledge, but FAITH.

Now the text is not a definition. It contains, rather, two important propositions about faith, with which the writer presumes his readers to be as familiar as they are with seeing or thinking. Like him I am not going to define Faith. I shall begin by pointing out what you all know, that faith is of two kinds : faith in principles, and faith in persons. You may believe in

science or in Galileo, in righteousness or in your father, in the progress of humanity or in your friend. In like manner you can believe in the omnipotence of love or in the living God, in the doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount or in Jesus Christ, the Savior of men. Faith is of one or the other kind. And you know just how such faith possesses your soul, just how it abides within you as the basis of activity. The object of your faith never vanishes, the image of it lives within you and certifies to you its reality and value. Thus the image of mother or wife or friend abides with us, once they conquer and command our confidence. The image forms itself, perhaps, quite slowly; at first dim, obscure, wavering, and not always attractive; then definite, vivid, charming, subjugating; at first demanding evidence, then when made perfect transcending proof, soaring into the region of certainty, defying doubt, and triumphantly dispensing with all need of argument. "Faithful among the faithless he" is one of those phrases in which poetry is wiser than philosophy. For by it Milton makes plain to us in a flash the real nature of faith; it is not the angelic intelligence that gazes unabashed into the face of God. Lucifer had that; yet he saw the face in vain. It is rather fidelity to the vision granted us, be it glorious or dim, be it a

throne surrounded with clouds or with angels, be it a bush flaming in the desert, a Christ crowned with thorns, or a Christ risen from the sepulcher. For do we not praise the fidelity that stands firm, not because of evidence, but in spite of it? "She believed in me," you hear some triumphant struggler say of his wife or his daughter, "when others thought me mad." "He never doubted me for an instant, and yet all appearances were against me!" With words like these we praise the steadfast friend!

And as it is with persons, so it is with principles. You are seized with what seems to be an imperative truth; a peremptory voice within you calls upon you to establish, to declare, to defend it. At first it haunted you merely. It came in dreams, in fragments, in glimpses, at odd moments, in the intervals between your daily actions, or between your portions of sleep. Doubts gathered about it and beclouded the heavenly vision. You reflected upon it, but thinking bewildered you; and you tried to drive it away again. It would not down at your bidding. Then you sought to make it clear, distinct, vivid, to free it from obscurity and uncertainty; you gave your mind and your whole soul to it. Until finally the idea became a reality overpowering you with its enchantment; transfiguring the world for

you; illuminating your future and expanding your life, giving new meaning to your activities and a key to your existence. You were for the first time at home in the world, and the sky above your head no longer seemed remote and empty. Your whole being swallowed in your discovery, yourself abandoned to a divine idea you had lost your life and found it again. Furthermore the larger and nobler this idea in which you lose your soul, the larger and nobler the soul that you receive for your surrender.

Let me now try to make my meaning plainer to you by a few examples. First of all, we will explore the region of principles to see whether these propositions hold there. Take, for instance, the principle that underlies all our science that makes any science possible. "What!" exclaims some scoffer, "surely science has naught to do with faith; science with its uncompromising logic, science with its sharp scrutiny of evidence, science with its cautious temper, science with its searching and relentless tests." Yes! my loquacious friend, when you have thought more you will talk less and not so loud! Science is impossible without faith. We must yield ourselves to an undemonstrable principle in order to have science at all. And here it is. *The universe is comprehensible by the human mind. Nature is here to be under-*

stood, and our minds are here to understand nature. This is only saying that knowledge is a reality and not a delusion, only saying that science is something more than a kaleidoscope, in which some bits of information can be shifted into forms of apparent symmetry. To say that knowledge is possible, is to proclaim a belief in the fitness of the mind to discover the mysteries which in these latter days it attacks so intrepidly. Now are you really shallow enough to think that you could PROVE this fitness of the mind to discover the secrets of nature? Are you so absurd as not to see that to prove any such correspondence of the human mind to the universe would require our science to be already completed? Whereas, our science has just begun. For anything that you can tell human intelligence is already dazzled and dazed with excess of light, the human brain is beginning to crack under the pressure of its knowledge, and the next stage will be delirium and not science. Bah! says the man of faith. Leave such chatter for babies and for cowards. Believe in Human Intelligence! Believe, too, that this glorious frame was made for us to explore and to comprehend! Nature has no secrets for skeptics and skulkers; she keeps them for her indefatigable believers. Why, some years ago when a German physiologist declared bluntly that he pur-

sued science simply to make a comfortable living, his frankness provoked disgust. "How many Newtons and Harveys and Faradays are we going to have in the future," men exclaimed indignantly, "if the faith in nature's comprehensibility, if the faith in human intelligence breaks down and the sciences are degraded to the level of the cow in the stable that we keep for the sake of butter and of cheese?"

"Melloni," who discovered the secrets of light and heat, "Melloni," said Professor Langley, "was born to science as some men are born to poetry." When a boy at Parma, a Voice came to him as it came to the child Samuel. And he would steal forth before the dawn to climb a hill, from the summit of which he could hold communion with the rising sun! Watch him as his eyes dilate and thrill responsive to the sunshine streaming from the distant orb! O! but that is only a peculiar tremor of his nerves, some eccentricity of nervous organization, some peculiar convolution of the brain, or some idiosyncrasy of the living tissue not very far, perhaps, from the limits of disease! Go to, thou chatterer! It is an instance of the faith in which science lives and moves and has its being, faith in the truth that hovers near the seeking soul accepting its Divine vocation; the faith of Copernicus and Kepler that God waits patiently for

discoverers; that when they come hunting for His hidden secrets He smiles upon them and guides them by the shinings of His face.

The skepticism that attacks the truths of morality and religion can not logically spare our science. For to the consistent skeptic there is no science nor possibility thereof: To him there is neither sure intelligence nor certain truth; to him there are only shadows of a perplexing Unknowable; shadows, fragmentary, tantalizing, deceptive. Hunger and thirst are the sure realities; let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.

Science depends upon the succession of believers who have in their faith the evidence of invisible realities, who carry into their investigations the substance of that hope which has enabled science to live on from age to age in spite of suspicion and contumely and persecution and black ingratitude. And since this applies to those departments of human discovery where experiment and observation are always possible, the sciences that we call exact, much more does it apply to those departments like Ethics and Sociology, where proof by experiment is out of the question. Or to put the same thought in the form of a question, "What is to become of our expectations for humanity and of our hopes of discovering

the laws and conditions of human progress, if we lose faith in their existence?" "Things look bad, I know," exclaims some one jauntily. "It is a long way from an oyster to a Plato, but it has been traveled!" Yes, it has been traveled once! It is a long way from an oyster to a drunken woman in the gutter, and that distance has been traveled often. What shall we do with our hopes in the face of depressing facts such as ignorance and drunkenness and brute violence; the tendencies to rebarbarization and anarchy among the poor, the cowardice of the respectable, the wantonness and cruelty among the rich? Are we, with our ideals of a divine-human society, rainbow-chasers? Shall we give up hopes of a better society because of disagreeable experiences and nasty exhibitions of human meanness? Or shall we derive the substance of a better world from the energy of a defiant faith? Shall we attack the social problems of our epoch with the cry of Jacob on our lips, "Wrestling I will not let thee go?" Or shall we supinely abandon effort and abandon hope, having no touch of God to keep our souls alive?

Art thou fain to help thy brother man? According to thy faith shall it be unto thee. It may be, and indeed it is, wisest to assume that in this wrestle with the social problem you will be crippled and go

halting upon your thigh in later days. Well! _Be a cripple and become a prince; wrestle with him, and win from God some whisper of His present name! Confront the problems of your time with faith. Recognize their magnitude and their difficulty. For only by stating these problems correctly can they be prepared for solution. But be not dismayed. If the vision tarry, wait for it! It will surely come. Nowhere in the whole range of inquiry is it so true as in our social science: "He whose soul is lifted up within him shall not walk straight, but the just shall live by His faith."

Here, then, are two principles which are the vital breath of science—the comprehensibility of nature, which is the life of physical and biological inquiry; and the perfectibility of humanity when obedient to discoverable laws of progress, which is the life of sociological investigation.

Let us turn now from belief in principles to faith in persons; there, too, we shall, I think, find reason for these propositions. Consider first our belief in ourselves, in our unity, and in our freedom. Who am I? Whence am I? What am I? I might believe myself a crest of foam on the billows of an ocean forever changing, a brief melody starting from eternal silence and swiftly returning thither, an arrow

shot into the air, a cloud fading into the sky. But I will not! No, as Jehovah liveth, I will *not*! I was only a point in the beginning, but now the circle of my thought sweeps outward till it touches God. My conscience tells me that I have power over myself, over my fate, over my future. It chides me for my weakness, reminds me of my self-sovereignty, challenges me to dare and to do. And in this conscience, in this reiteration of my control of my fate lies for me the promise of the future. My consciousness grows rich and joyful, breaking over the bounds of to-day and conceiving itself an indestructible will-power. "O! but you can not prove that you are free," the skeptic scoffs. That energy of will that asserts itself in moments of temptation, that conscience that saves you from the clutch of sin, they may be chimeras after all. You can not prove that you are free! Well, suppose I can not! I can not prove that I am alive to a corpse. If you have no sense of freedom, I can not prove my freedom to *you*, but I am sure of it to myself. All the objections I have ever confronted have only irritated and repelled me, only stirred my soul into rebellion, or eclipsed me with moral bewilderment and fear. To any kind of life that seems to me worth living, the belief in my own freedom, in a certain limited power

over my own character and conduct is absolutely necessary. I can no more live without this belief than I can breathe without oxygen. This faith of mine, invincible to all opposition, this basis of my life is to me the evidence of that which by its very nature must remain unseen. My conscience rising supreme and sublime in the hour of fierce temptation, with its imperative "I will" and "I will not," must be the warrant of its own integrity, of its own autonomy, its own Divine illumination.

One glides easily from such thoughts as the destiny of humanity and the integrity of conscience to the thought of man's destiny and integrity beyond the grave. For let a man hold fast to his conscience in this life, let him by God's grace become worthy of immortality, and the proof of it is not far to seek, for it lies in his own soul. This is what Jesus meant when He said it is eternal life to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. This is what John meant when he wrote, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." In other words, the pledge and surety of immortal life is not to be found in cunning arguments about the nature of the soul, but in the sense of powers unemployed, of ideals unfulfilled, of possibilities struggled after but unachieved. The proof is to be found in the

feeling of contact with the personal God, the eternal Father of our souls, who will not suffer us to be plucked from His hands, in the conviction that we are of the same essence with God, partakers of the Divine nature, rejoicing in the Divine will, and gladly co-operating with the Divine purpose. Possessed with such desires and conviction, seized of the Eternal Spirit, the soul exclaims exultantly: Why should I die? Am I not just emerging from a life of weakness and ignorance and selfishness and wrong-doing? Why should I die; have I not just discovered the secret of real being, the mysterious joy of existence? Why should I die when I am come to do Thy will, O God? Are not Thy mansions many? Are not Thy habitations eternal? Are not Thy plans manifold and far-reaching? Surely somewhere amid Thy mighty undertakings Thou canst find a work for me! Once I was, indeed, a rebellious striker against Thy will, but now I have discovered Thee, now I am growing like Thee. Now I feel the stirrings of eternity within me. Thou art the God of the living, and in finding Thee I first learned that I was indeed alive.

I know that this is a reversing of the common teaching, to tell you to be sure of the worth of your own soul first, and then to search in it for the evi-

dence of immortality. But I would rather think with Paul and John and Jesus than with the common man. Do not ask proof of your immortality; be good and true, and you shall find it. God is our life and our light! If our little planet broke loose from the sun it would wither and perish; we are safe enough so long as our lives are hid with Christ in God.

Some Romans tried to persuade the world that Julius Cæsar had risen from the dead; at least that he had become a God. But the thing was too preposterous. Few were credulous enough to swallow that. Not so however with Jesus Christ. It seems in His case so natural that God should not suffer Him to see corruption. Death could not hold Him! It might bruise Him, but it could not lay Him low. And in the same way the life that is in us is the guarantee of its own persistence. The love that will not perish, the love that cherishes the recollections of the departed so that they become at last more real than the voices and faces of those near us in the flesh, this is the earnest and pledge of our reunion. I am persuaded, wrote St. Paul, that neither principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature can separate us from—what? Why, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Love,

then, if you would live. Let the parent cling to the child; let the child cling to the parent; let the affection be too strong for death to shatter. Let your friendships be worthy of immortality, seek those who shall be worth knowing always, men who grow larger as they grow older, women that become diviner as their earthly beauty fades away. Embrace the figure and the soul of Jesus, your Savior, with the faith that works by love, and laugh the skeptic to silence with your exultant cry: "Believe what you choose about your own soul, but mine is too full of love and of love-life to be obliterated by a short journey to another world."

Or consider next the personality of others. How strange, how awful is our separation from each other! Each soul is hermetically sealed; we can not creep into each other's consciousness. So that in moments of doubt and distrust we can not get at the reality; suspicion darkens and ruins the peace of friends and the happiness of love. Who has not some time in his life beaten helplessly against these separating walls? To live together happily we must trust each other, believe in a love that is invisible and that shows itself in tokens only. We may stain these tokens with jealousy and doubt, and shut ourselves

away from our beloved ; we may refuse to believe in teachers, in rulers, in prophets, in redeemers until life becomes a torment and a tragedy. For it is a madness to demand of each other the impossible, the turning inside out the lining of our souls for thorough scrutiny. What a picture is that of Jane Carlyle reading letters as beautiful as ever touched a woman's heart, and protesting that Carlyle wrote them to adorn his future biography ! What a picture is that of the man and woman in the Norwegian drama writhing helpless in the coils of a distrust that murders love and life ! For once the soul is abandoned to unbelief, all evidence is vain. What can take the place of faith when faith departs ? To be distrusted ; how helpless one becomes ! How tormenting the impossible wish to make bare one's soul, to prove one's fidelity by some miracle of inward revelation.

But did it ever occur to you that this difficulty of getting into the other's soul is the origin of the preposterous demands we often make of God ? We assure Him, like the French poet, that we will believe in Him if He will turn His infinite being inside out for our inspection, if He will become a King of Lilliput, that we may hold Him in our right hand

and examine Him at our leisure! Do you think my words extravagant? Let me quote the lines of Musset to which I have referred:

“If suffering and prayer
Can not reach Thy Majesty,
Keep for Thyself Thy solitary grandeur,
But close forever yonder immensity.
If our mortal anguish though
Can climb to Thee
If in Thine eternal dwelling-place
Our groans are heard,
Then break the deep blue vault
That covers creation.
Lift the curtains of the world
And show Thyself, God, just and good!
Then on the broad earth
Thou shalt find eager faith and love.
Humanity entire and everywhere
Will fall at Thy feet with joy.”

There you have it. Is it not preposterous? Infinite, become Thou finite! Immaterial, become Thou material! Creator, turn Thy creation inside out and show Thyself to mortal eyes; then Thou shalt have our worship and our love! Alas! What fools we are! Is it not enough that He is there, and that every leaf and every breeze and every sunbeam bears witness of His presence? Enough that He speaks to us from burning bush and celestial constellation, from the face of martyr and from the mouth of

prophet and from the song of poet and the deeds of saint? Enough that His still small voice makes itself heard distinct and clear in the moment of trial, in the sharpness of temptation, in the rapture of moral victory and spiritual progress, in the aspirations of the ages and the march of history? So, too, with Jesus Christ our Lord. How absurd the discussions about Him among those who have never given the Gospel narratives a chance to make their own impression! How absurd the discussion of Him among those to whom any religion is at best a psychological phenomenon or a bit of history! Would you care for the opinion of those who had never heard the music of Beethoven or of Wagner about either master? Would you care for their opinion who never took any music seriously? Why should you or I care, then, for what the worldly-minded or the curious think of Jesus Christ? I bow reverently to every serious student of my Master. I have no reproaches for earnest men who differ from me. It requires all of us to know Him as He really is. But as in the days of His passion so now He is His own witness, and the proof of His transcendent nature is in the faith that He evokes, and in the response of our souls to His Word and to His commands. Why if the impossible were possible, if He were to vanish

altogether from the world, the bare remembrance of the beauty and the blessing that vanished with Him would make the shadow of His retreating splendor more luminous and more efficacious than all the ideas that would rush in pell-mell to take His place!

Once more I think of Melloni, his face turned eastward, waiting for the rising sun; faith gleaming in his eyes, his slender frame a-tremble with expectancy. Here and there a star looks down upon the eager lad who heeds them not, unconscious of their lingering. Slowly the great orb rolls upward through the crystal atmosphere; swiftly the nerves of the watcher thrill to the warmth he seems to see and the light he seems to feel. The secret of the sunshine that is within him answers to the glory that pours upon him. Thrill to thrill. Mystery of mind to mystery of matter. Deep of the human soul to the great solar deeps so near and yet so far away. Tell that marvelous boy that yonder sun is only a huge *Aurora Borealis*; tell him that the thrill within him is only a neural tremor, without significance or correspondence with any higher truth or any all-pervading energy! I think he would turn upon you with a quiet smile: Why, man, there is waiting for me a great truth to discover, to proclaim, and to expound! And so the secret of the Lord is with them

that fear Him. He that believeth upon the Son of God hath the witness in himself ! So the Light of the world reveals His radiant energy, not to the idler upon the roadside, not to the chatterer upon the highway, not to the disputant in the market-place, but to the one that seeks Him early and climbs to Him in moral earnestness, that He may thrill responsive to the first upslanting beam ; to the one that seeks Him, not simply for the luxury of contemplation nor the increase of knowledge, but that the heart may be purer and the life clearer and more beneficent, that the home may be sweeter and the workshop nobler and the commonwealth reveal Christ's presence and the world rejoice in the coming of His kingdom.

Faith is not a creed, a schedule of propositions to be thumbed mentally like the beads of a rosary ; faith is the evidence of the Unseen, of the principles you live by, of the persons human and Divine in whom you trust ; faith is the substance of your hopes for time and for eternity. If you have no faith, how shriveled and shrunken is the world in which you live ! If you have no faith, how paltry is the world you make ! But if you have faith, it is sublimely true that all things are possible to him that believeth.

IV.

HOME.

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."—
Eccl. ix, 9, 10.

THESE passages belong together, though nearly always the latter is torn from the former and made the basis of appeals to action and to a desperate expenditure of strength.

But the preacher was too sad a man, too familiar with the tragedy of common life, too familiar with the vanity of all things under the sun to have given his voice to that pitiless cry of work, that rings like the sound of a fire-bell in the ears of this hustling generation. On the contrary, he means to say, and

does say, that the one bright spot in human industry, the one sweet prize of earthly ingenuity and earthly effort is a perfect home, a round of blessed days with the wife of one's heart and in the household of one's own creation.

The preacher knew, however, none better than he, that a perfect home is not the outcome of mere luck or the discovery of a happy moment; it requires a clear brain and a glad mind; self-restraint and energy, inventive industry and loving patience. It must be made in the midst of difficulties, in the presence of danger and of death. From the bridal altar to the bier is only a step. Therefore live joyfully with the wife thou lovest; there is much for thee to do before thy gladness is complete; there is need of all thy device, all thy knowledge, all thy wisdom. And there is none of these in the grave whither thou goest.

"Until death us do part." How pathetic the words in which the man and woman plight their troth to each other! How terrible the necessity which compels them to salute the Shadow of Death, even at their wedding festival! How swiftly though we turn away our eyes! For we shun the inevitable with a shiver. In rare moments and with bated breath we mention to each other the awful certainty

of separation. God forbid! we murmur. God postpone the day! Our voices grow unsteady; our eyes grow dim; for a moment we hold each other's hands; and then the rush of common life sweeps us forward into busy forgetfulness again.

But death, the wise man saw, was not the real calamity; wasted opportunity rather is the one evil to be deplored. For a man and woman to have the chance of a great happiness together and to fail of it, to have about them the making of a happy home, and yet never to achieve one, is surely of all tragedies the most pitiful, of all earthly failures the most deplorable.

For is there any sight under the stars more beautiful than the triumph of loving hearts in the perfection of their companionship? Seeing that such a triumph is at once a victory over self and over circumstance, over evil days and frequent difficulty, over ignorance and anxiety, over the weakness of human nature, the ravages of time, over the perplexities of society, and in most cases over the trying task of parental responsibility.

To begin with, then, the home should be recognized as a Divine institution, ordained of God's love as the institution for which all others—State, Church, workshop, school—exist. We are in sad

danger, it seems to me, of turning things upside down, of making that the chief thing in life which is only secondary and auxiliary. We talk about a life-work, life-task, life-missions with easy flippancy, gliding unconsciously away from the chief task which God has laid upon the most of us, the perfection of human society in and through the power of the home. Doubtless there are those to whom God has denied the joy of this task. One gathers from the words of St. Paul that there were moments when he felt more keenly this sacrifice than all the others incident to his mission. Yet even those who have no such "portion under the sun" would labor and suffer in vain if the home should perish from the face of the earth.

For the true measure of civilization—and Christianity is only a celestial civilization slowly working itself out upon the earth—the true measure of any civilization is found, not in its legislation, nor in its architecture, not in its poetry, nor in its politics, not in its industry and its commerce, nor even in its schools and churches, but in the extent to which all of them are made to contribute to the perfection of the family and the glory of the home.

When Henry IV of France declared that he wished every peasant in France to have a chicken in

the pot for his Sunday dinner, he was, to be sure, not thinking very high; but he was thinking in the right direction, and he was giving the world in this homely phrase the clew to his magnificent administration. He had discovered clearly enough that the center of political gravity is the home, not the throne. Pericles had touched the same principle in statelier words when he contrasted the beauty and the rich variety of Athenian life with the scant and severe existence of the Spartan, urging his people on to sacrifice and to death, rather than basely abandon their great achievement.

Edmund Burke used to say that the chief outcome of all the political struggles from *Magna Charta* down was to get twelve good men in a jury box. But Burke was clearly wrong. The chief outcome of all struggles, political and ecclesiastical, struggles with the fist and struggles with the mind, is the liberty and the power to make a perfect home.

Secondly, let us recognize that the making of a perfect home is a work of art, and not the result of luck or happy circumstance. There is indeed a genius for architecture and a genius for poetry, a genius for science and a genius for music; but how slow we are to recognize that the perfect home is built by brains! For the outside of our home we

choose, if we can afford it, an architect who has studied all styles and who knows every detail necessary to a perfect structure. We rejoice to see the material expression of his thought standing before us, with its many features running together into unobtrusive but attractive unity. How seldom it occurs to us that the invisible interior, the spiritual and intellectual home, the library of luminous thought, the rooms of love and sweet courtesy and gracious interchange of feelings and ideas, are more difficult to plan and far more difficult to execute than all this work in stone and wood! When the vision of the sculptor has taken shape of beauty to our delighted eyes, we are not silly enough to glory in the mallet and the chisel. We praise the Artist's mind. Yet if the rough-hewn block should never yield its finest possibility, its veins are not of blood, nor running into nerves that suffer torture, and the sculptor's blunder sends no suffering through the marble fiber. But when we mar with thoughtless words and cutting speech the souls intrusted to our love, this hurts and keeps on hurting. Our blunder is a cruelty, our carelessness a crime.

Now the life in the family is a life of souls that shape each other daily, either into ugliness or beauty. The aged mother, fretful, impatient, imperious, irri-

table, discontented, is the work too frequently of selfish husband and disobedient children. They complain of her! God forgive them! They should complain of themselves, for they have made her what she is. That pale-faced girl, gentle, uncomplaining, her I mean with the hectic flush upon the cheek, who coughs at intervals and laughs to hide her cough,—why, she is her mother's handicraft. Poor child, her mother always nags her so! Her fingers are full of rings, but a clasp of love were worth them all. Gowns! Dear me, she has no end of gowns! And the rough brothers are good to her, they think. And her father speaks of her with pride, and then lets her serve him like a slave. O these blundering sculptors of a human life, how they mar and mutilate in sheer neglect and selfishness the happiness they might create!

But yonder man, so strong, so cheerful, so serenely masterful in times of difficulty,—whose handicraft, pray tell us, is that soul of his? The joint work likely of God and himself? O no! But of the mother that loved him, of the wife that he loves, of the children that rise up to call him blessed. And he has thought about his home. He took pains and brains to make it perfect. Busy all his life—for he has performed great tasks and evaded no duties—

he has for all that never robbed the wife of his love, by giving to business the hours that belonged to her; he has never cheated his children wholly of their father's presence and their father's thoughtful care. He has faced calamity. Death, too, has struck him with his cruel wings—there are moments when his features show the traces of recollected gloom—but the children as they gather round him rejoice to see the touches of their loving hands upon their father's features, even as they feel the touch of his shaping intelligence upon their strong souls. While the wife of his love rejoices in him and in them, knowing quite well that they are the reward of her patient thoughtfulness and unwearied hope. This interchange of influence inside the family is at once the mystery, the power, and the possible destruction of its peace and joy. But the law of it must be grasped early and applied with luminous patience and sagacious love. Each household will encounter its own problem, and each family must face its own difficulties; resolutely, courageously, cheerfully to apply one's mind to the solution and the conquest of them is the part of wisdom. But the chief thing, I repeat, is to recognize the Divine sacredness of the tasks of family life, and, having assumed them, to achieve them with calculating skill and unwavering affection.

But, thirdly, the home must be created now. For there is no knowledge and no device in the grave whither we are going. Think, says the wise man, how helpless are the dead towards the living. Just what power we may have over this world when we become immortal spirits none of us may know. But one thing is quite clear, any power we may have hereafter will be limited by the memories of us in the minds of those with whom we lived. Even Jesus our Savior submitted to this law. For He wrought His image into the hearts of His disciples, of Mary and Martha, and the women who ministered to Him, so that when He reappeared to them after the resurrection the sound of His voice thrilled their souls and the sight of His hands touching the bread He blessed told who He was, even as He vanished from their bewildered eyes. To-day is richer, if yesterday was beautiful. What can to-morrow be for us if empty of precious memories? The dead rest from their labors and their works do follow them, if there are any works to follow. Mother may die, but she may leave behind her recollections so gracious, so beautiful, so powerful, that her new life with God is a perpetual reminder and a perpetual inspiration to her children. If she leaves no memories, her grave will have no power. The flowers that blossom above

her dust are fragrant with no reminiscences ; and the poor dust is powerless to warn or to help, to encourage or to console. But if she leaves a precious image in her children's minds, then there is something for her angel finger to touch, by which to thrill, to master ; then she has left a ladder for her beloved, up which their faith can help them climb to be clasped once more in her glorified arms.

Browning has given expression to this idea in the wonderful lines addressed to his wonderful wife :

“O lyric love, half angel and half bird,
And all a wonder and a wild desire.
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Can thy soul know change? Hail then,
And hearken from the realms of help.
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bared head and beseeching hand,
That still despite the distance and the dark
What was, again may be ; some interchange
Of soul, some splendor once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile.”

You catch the poet's thought? The whole power of his beloved to help him in his loneliness originated in the splendor formerly her thought, in the benediction anciently her smile. God knows, I would not make you sad. But death may smite us any moment. Shall we have no anchor in the souls of those we

love? Shall we drift out into the distance and the dark, never again to do them any good? Never to help them in their struggles, in their temptations, in their defeats, in their agony and sorrow? Aye, we shall vanish away into utter helplessness unless we do with our might whatever now we find to do. But not death itself can break our hold on our beloved if we are tender and true, thoughtful and brave, just and sagacious, NOW. Jesus wrote no books. For Him no monument was ever builded. But He loved Himself into the hearts of His disciples. Then came the Holy Ghost and kindled their recollections of Him into life and power for mankind. "I must work," He said, "while it is day, for the night cometh in which no man can work." And therefore in three short years He so wrought Himself into the memory of the world that the shadow of Him is mightier than the substance of the Cæsars, and the echoes of His sayings are the consolation of humanity. Go thou and do likewise! Do not be dreaming of what you are going to do when the globe becomes four-cornered and the stars shall shine with colored light. Set about doing what you can do now. Not in the madness of a sudden impulse, but in the rapture of returning tenderness make glad your home with a glorious thoughtfulness and diffuse about you the

joy of one who loves his fellow-men. Thus, and thus only, can you share the immortality of Jesus Christ, living with Him at once in heaven and on the earth. Powerful as He is powerful in spite of death, because like Him you have eternal life with God, and eternal memory with them for whom you lived and thought and labored.

But, finally, remember how helpless the living always are towards the dead. While they are with us we can always do something for them, or at any rate show them how gladly we would serve them. But when they leave us to return no more they pass beyond the reach of our intention and of our thinking and of our activity. To me there is something exquisitely painful in the fact that some of my beloved will never need me any more. O! I would work my fingers to the bone! I would go without food and without sleep, if I could only have again the privilege that I once esteemed so lightly, the privilege of household ministries. One Sunday morning last year the dearest friend* of my early manhood dropped unconscious in his pulpit, and was carried home to die. Brave and true and good, no darkness clings about his fate—he has been gathered to his fathers, and his fathers are with God.

* William J. Stephenson.

But I rejoice now that for once the last letter was mine! That only a few weeks before, even though my brain was aching and my eyes were full of pain, I had written him how much I loved him, how much I thanked him and his wife for all their patience with me, and for the welcome that I used to find at their home in the lonely days when I had no fireside of my own, and when my faith seemed to be breaking under the pressure of long and anxious thought.

It is not always so. Many a time one stands by the open grave, smitten with the recollection of the thing one intended but forgot to do, or the sudden suggestion of what one might have done! And how terrible the sense of utter helplessness, of the irrevocable and irrecoverable and vanished opportunities, the chances of sweet courtesies gone forever.

And how bitter all this is when it touches that neglect so common in our modern life, neglect of souls. Our heathen ancestors believed in the priesthood of the fathers and the inspiration of the mothers of the household. Jesus taught the woman of Samaria that God is no respecter of places; that He is to be worshiped not in the temple made with hands, but in the soul fashioned by His own Spirit. And where should we look more eagerly for glimpses of God than in the spirits of our children and in the

hearts of our beloved? There is a painful separation of our religious from our familiar thoughts. Even where the family altar still exists it is often the center of constraint, when it ought to be the delight and beauty of the home! And how rare indeed is that gracious skill that entrances when the theme is Jesus Christ! Why should our tones change and our throats become dry and our speech constrained and unnatural when we talk of Him and the meaning of His life?

God forbid that I should encourage that flippancy of phrase which makes the pious talk of some good people rather a barrier than a bridge to heaven! And God forbid that any words of mine should restore to our firesides the old spirit of religious disputation! Both of these are bad; the latter often devilish. But might we not learn to talk naturally and sweetly about the noblest, richest, dearest realities of the universe? Might we not in our gayest moments and in our wildest merriment think of Him who is the source of all pure joy? And could we not convey to those about us, sometimes subtly and quietly and sometimes with a buoyant frankness, that we are not ashamed of Jesus Christ? Then as your boy grows up to manhood, perceiving

how your life was shaped and glorified by faith, he too will believe. Then as your daughter opens her eyes with strange wonder upon the charms and perils of the world, perceiving how all the graces of womanhood were perfected in her mother by confidence in God, she too will turn to seek this fountain of perpetual beauty. And as you both grow older, and the touch of years whitens your hair, and you begin to tremble as you climb the staircase, and a faintness in the one brings sudden terror to the other, even then you will talk to each other cheerfully, quite confident of better days beyond. Death will have no power to separate you from each other or from the children either, because you have done with your might whatsoever your hands have found to do. The friends of your childhood may fade away, but the friends of your children will learn to think of Jesus Christ by watching you. The company of those that you have helped with word and deed, that you have led to your Redeemer by kindly speech and brave example, will be always growing larger, and you will come to feel yourself an indestructible force, a power eternal in the homes and hearts of men. But some among you look up wistfully. O preacher, our homes are desolate! And some among you, though your hearts are merry now, shiver for

the moment as you think of a possible loneliness when all the present scene has passed away.

O friends, are there no mercies ye can do? Think! Are there no deeds of kindness for you to perform? Is there no forgotten friend of your childhood to whom a gift would bring a heart-leap? Is there no struggling lad that you might help to his ambition? Is there no darkened home to which you might bring hope? No blighted soul to whom you might bring help? Surely there must be something for your hand to do. Do it with thy might, for there is no knowledge and no device in the grave whither they are going. O we are so helpless towards the dead! Once upon a time a scholar sat in his study writing. His work was difficult, and taxed his utmost powers. Suddenly a sweet child's voice checked his eager pen. "Papa, you promised to take me to see the Christmas things." "O my darling, I'm so busy now. Can't your mamma go?" The little chin began to quiver, the blue eyes filled with tears. Soon the child returned, and mother came along to plead her cause. The scholar rose and kissed his little girl, and sallied forth with cheery words to see the windows filled with Christmas sights. They never went again. On New-Year's day the body of his little girl was laid away in the

grave, which has no knowledge and no device and no wisdom. And since then more than once the scholar has left his work at Christmas-time to look at the windows filled with Christmas things; strangers wonder at the gray-haired man whose lips move as though he were talking with himself, not dreaming of the invisible companion with whom he holds converse. Papa, make them happy, make them happy now! There is no knowledge, there is no device in the grave! And once more thank you, bless you, papa, for that happy walk we took together the Christmas week before I went away.

Methodist
Historical Society
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Conference

V.

THE BONDAGE AND DELIVERANCE OF
CREATION.

*"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth
for the manifestation of the sons of God."*—Rom.
viii, 19.

THESE words of St. Paul have haunted me since my boyhood. There is in them something like the moan of the sea or the roar of the great city; through and above this, however, fragments of a melody struggling to be heard, the music of a great hope, of a patient and indomitable expectation.

Fragments only of a melody; for the words have baffled me again and again, and only recently have they ever seemed to disclose their meaning. Much that I thought formerly about them appears now to have been both wrong and foolish. But these fragments of a melody, these glimmerings of a vision, this partial grasping of a great conception has transformed, for myself at any rate, the aspect of the sky, and woven into the changes of the lake a perpetual

challenge to do my utmost not to thwart, but to accomplish the purposes of God. To put this view before your minds, I am going to ask two questions :

I. WHAT DID ST. PAUL MEAN? and

II. WHAT CONFIRMATION DOES OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE GIVE US OF HIS THOUGHT?

I. Creation, says Paul, has been subjected unwillingly to slavery. It is compelled to participate in the follies, the crimes, the miseries of men. But this participation is not necessary ; because the transformation of man is possible. Sky and sea, cloud and forest, all the splendor and all the strength of nature will be delivered from their bondage when the sons of God appear. Or to state the principle that underlies it all, just in proportion as humanity is delivered from bondage are the forces around and about humanity released from the service of folly and unrighteousness ; just in proportion as any community or any nation rises to a divine life, just in that proportion do all things swing round, working for good to them that love God. The earlier commentators in explaining this passage went back to the well-known words in Genesis, in which the ground is cursed for Adam's sake and the pains of child-bearing inflicted upon the mother of all the living. But Paul when using the Old Testament

dealt with it as a book of symbols. To him the ancient stories embodied ever-present realities. Men and women are always being tempted and always falling into disobedience and guilt, and always dragging creation into bondage with them. To every forlorn Adam and Eve, to guilty humanity everywhere, the earth wears an aspect of degradation; that which might have been a garden in which the Lord God walks becomes a place of thorns and thistles, because it becomes a place of follies and of wickedness. The energies of creation unite with the transgressions of men to make the splendor sordid and to make the strength of man his drudgery and sorrow. So that a sublime experience like motherhood is fraught with pain and anguish, so that the activity of man, which of itself should bring perpetual joy, becomes a drudgery in which we earn our bread in the sweat of our faces, even the sunbeams adding to our misery. Nothing is more remarkable in St. Paul than the unflinching way in which he depicts the experience of the soul and of the world. Both are in a bad way, and the whole creation is involved. Splendid forces are enchained, great opportunities are hidden from human sight, vast and magnificent possibilities of happiness lie waiting for a better race of beings. Nature is an unwilling captive. The wealth, the

energy, the order even of creation has been brought into complicity with the folly and the unrighteousness of men. Let me put my thought back into the place and the picture in which it first came to me. I was standing at Niagara Falls, at the spot on the island where, so the story goes, a foolish father held his child over the rushing waters, only to see the boy leap into the falling torrent and appear no more. "How cruelly treacherous," I said to myself, "is nature even in her majesty and in her beauty! Death lurks in her sublimities and destruction in her loveliness!" Almost instantly I heard the still small voice of protest above the roar of the cataract. "We," remonstrated the foaming waters, "We had no part in the father's recklessness. We are in bondage. He found his way hither bringing along his smiling child, and trifled with us. Behind us was the resistless push of natural law, the permanent will of God, from which there is no escape. And thus we become unwilling partners in the follies and crimes that men commit. If fools fling themselves into our sweeping splendors, how can we prevent it? If engineers come hither to employ our energies, and the result is, after all, only more drudgery for human hands and brains, is that our doing? We are waiting, expecting earnestly the manifestation of the

sons of God. When they appear, when men and women are both wise and good, we shall no longer be unwilling instruments of human folly and unrighteousness; we shall become the willing servants of this redeemed and glorified humanity."

Since then I have found the following words in a powerful drama written by the Norwegian poet, Bjornson, one of the noblest (if not the very noblest) figures of existing literature. They are placed by him upon the lips of a character typical of what is truest, sweetest, divinest in modern womanhood!

"Does not Nature," she exclaims, "does not Nature cry to us, 'Shame! Shame! You spatter blood upon my leaves and mingle death-cries with my songs. You darken the air before me with cruel complaints.' So Nature cries to us. 'My spring-tide is defiled by you. Your sickness, your evil thoughts skulk about in the green turf. Everywhere, like stagnant water, is the smell of misery.' So Nature cries to us. 'Your greed and your envy are a pair of twins that have fought each other from birth. Only my highest mountains, only my desert strands, my ice-floes have not seen them; elsewhere on every fold of earth traces of blood and hoarse cries tell of their presence. In the midst of my eternal beauty men have thought out a hell and kept it

full. Rubbish and curses have they mingled with my loveliness and my purpose of perfection.' ” This I take it, is the modern expression of Paul's idea. The earth must carry her vast multitudes through space, whether they utter songs or cries, whether they beat out each other's brains or delight each other's souls; the sun must shine upon the activities of men, whether they fill their habitations with misery or their homes with gladness. The grain must go to the mill or to the distillery as men may decree, to furnish food or misery. The wind, the iron, and the water must turn man's machinery for him, whether it increases happiness or increases woe. In a word, all the strength and all the splendor of nature are degraded whenever and wherever man degrades himself. And they are liberated and ennobled whenever man exalts himself.

This is Paul's first thought, but he adds exultingly another. This enslavement is not perpetual. For man's ignorance and folly and sin are not necessary. On the contrary, man's exaltation, man's redemption, is in the plan of God, and with it comes the deliverance of nature from this involuntary bondage. It is a false view of man and of nature to regard man as the slave of his surroundings, however grand and splendid these may be. Man is a slave

only so long as he yields his members to unrighteousness, and the bondage of nature is the consequence and not the cause of his degradation. Let him rise to his full might as the son and heir of God; let him be free in Jesus Christ; let humanity once grasp the purpose of God, and spring forward to meet and to achieve it; lo! from hidden fountains will stream emancipated powers; the whole creation that now groans and travails together will become melodious with a song sweeter and grander than that of the morning stars because of this appearance of the sons of God. Let me refer to another master of modern thought, Arthur Helps, one of the sanest of English historians and philosophers. Concluding his remarkable "Friends in Council," he speaks of the resources of nature as locked up, so to speak, until the human races rise high enough in the moral scale to use them righteously.

Now I know that current thought runs in a different direction. Conquer the spiritual through the material is the modern talisman. And there is a tone of exultation in those who speak of our physical science as though man had already conquered nature. Never until man conquers himself can he deliver nature from her bondage and become the owner of her wealth. Until he conquers himself, until he be-

comes indeed the very son of God, every increase of knowledge and of power is fraught with peril and possibilities of woe. Such is the meaning of Paul, and such was the teaching of Jesus. Never can man enter upon his great inheritance until he is transformed by the Spirit of God, never until he adopts freely the Eternal Father who has subjected these things to him can he have that perfect co-operation with the forces of the world, that perfect use of the riches of creation. Nature groans and waits, and waits and groans for the manifestation of the sons of God.

II. If this is what St. Paul means, let us turn then to the second question. How far is this view of nature's degradation and deliverance confirmed by modern knowledge?

I. It is confirmed, it seems to me, by our modern discovery of universal, all-prevailing law. How did we reach it? By simple honesty; by rejecting falsehood about the creation in which we live. A noble company of thinking martyrs have destroyed the errors in which creation was enslaved. There was a time when the sky was alive with spooks and witches; the midocean, before the days of Columbus, was imagined to be a region of supernatural terrors, through which no mariner could sail alive.

But now the sea and the sky have been cleansed of this foul brood of a fertile human ignorance, and the stars no longer frighten us with baleful fancies born of human cruelty and human dread. So far as nature has been delivered, she has been delivered from the bondage of falsehood and vindictiveness, which of old she was compelled to serve. For it must never be forgotten that the malign spirits that roamed abroad and blighted lives were only the shadows of human hate and human fear. It is a great mistake to overlook the moral causes which have helped us to this knowledge, and a still graver one to forget that this knowledge only helps us to a beneficent use of nature and nature's storehouse of energy as we come closer to the image of our Lord. And this our boasted knowledge, this very idea of law, may become a new superstition if we do not cherish and apply the teaching of St. Paul. The ogre Necessity, with his twin children, heredity and environment, threatens to destroy our birthright in Jesus Christ. Imagine yourself a thing, a mere product, a mere effect; lo! you, and nature with you, will sink to the old slavery! Unless you think of yourself as a possible son of God, mightier than heredity and mightier than environment because supported by God's indwelling Spirit, you will drag creation, in spite

of its majesty and its magnitude, down to your own sad level. The universe is neither your master nor your slave. The universe changes as you change. You need not shrivel as the stars grow large; you need not drop down whining because you can not make the sun rise in the west. But the stars will shrivel if you shrink, and all the processes of nature will be unable to help you if you do not by God's grace assert yourself to be the child of the Eternal God, ready to cope with all the forces about you, and to co-operate with them to do the Father's will.

The false conception of law as necessity degrades humanity and degrades nature by making of both blind and helpless things. It makes creation empty, for nowhere is there any God. Law rightly conceived is only an aspect of Him; only the expression of His permanent being. It tells us that God has character; that He is not fickle, whimsical, capricious, arbitrary; that God is not like an indulgent parent, the slave of our desires. Strange, therefore, that men should torture so magnificent an idea as that of universal law into a proof of God's absence from creation. Why, law is the proof that He is always and everywhere present. But this universal frame is helpless to convince us if we do not grow in moral stature; and we repeat the old process with

our new discovery: "Professing ourselves to be wise we become fools, our reasonings become vain, and our foolish hearts are darkened."

Nature forbids no man to pray. But he may becloud nature with this new superstition until she seems to do it. Shall I pray to Him? "Turn the question round," says nature. Will you praise Him? Will you rejoice in the order that He has established? Will you wait patiently for Him in the time of drought and storm and calamity? Do you not know, foolish mortal, that desires are prayers? That you can not help praying? Will you seek the mind of Jesus, who rejoiced to see His Father sending rain upon just and unjust, and causing His sun to shine on the evil and the good? And will you employ your increased knowledge for the deliverance of nature from base uses? Then you will praise and pray as never before. Do the angels pray, I wonder? Upon first thought one might think not, for surely in the long companionship with God they have acquired trust in Him and are beyond the need of prayer! Well, an archangel would pray if he were scared just as naturally as Simon Peter did; though an archangel might not be frightened easily. Only a tremendous break in the order of things, only a far-reaching exercise of God's strength and inge-

nuity could shake him into perplexity and prayer. Consider this, however: Prayer is a candid interchange of thought with God, and when we so conceive it, it follows that the mightiest ought to pray the most. For to them the great desire should be to use their powers rightly. The one great thing to learn is the will of God in every crisis of our enterprises. So that if God should heap upon me power and opportunity, if He should lay the solar system at my feet, I should not need Him less, but more.

Plant and planet, sunbeam and lightning, multitudinous waves and multitudes of men, the wealth of the mountains and the energies of mind; these hast Thou given me, O God! Then teach me how to use them! Then show me how to reach the utmost of Thy great intention! O! what a world it would be if every possessor of wealth, if every wielder of authority and power, knelt daily with Jesus at the feet of God praying sincerely, "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven!"

2. But this view of St. Paul is confirmed by our modern knowledge of ourselves. Do not be frightened. I am not going into the intricacies of psychology; I shall not carry you into metaphysical fog-banks. I shall be content to point out that our mod-

ern researches teach us that each of us builds his own world, that the sky is one thing to dog Diamond and another thing to Sir Isaac Newton, and necessarily so. Because Diamond brings to it a canine brain and a canine heart. How slowly my teachers convinced me that the rainbow and the blue dome of the sky were creations of my own, and that the universe changed as I grew larger and wiser and more pure. But this law of my own being need not dismay me. For as I rise in the scale of being—and rise, thank God, I can—the universe ceases to be the bond slave of my evil thoughts and purposes, and becomes the helper and supporter of my new nature. To the color-blind the iridescent clouds have no existence; to the cruel-hearted and selfish, nature has no beneficent uses. Microscopes and telescopes brought hidden worlds from darkness. O! for enlargement of our spiritual vision, that we might discover the wealth of happiness stored away in these forces now enslaved to human pride and arrogance and greed. Paul is referred to constantly in our time as the one who transformed Christianity into a theology. Do people never read the thirteenth of First Corinthians or the eighth of Romans any more? Faith and Hope and Love; with these Paul expected to deliver not humanity only, but all cre-

ation from bondage, expecting the latter to become an instrument of justice and of joy as soon as the sons of God appeared.

You know the story of the tailor at Niagara who at sight of the rainbows rising from the snow-white columns and the waters shattered into foam laid his petty soul across the splendor, crying, "What a place to sponge a coat!" So we stain creation with our stinginess and discontent, and our moods of petulance and anger and hatred, until the whole vast splendor becomes a mere echo of our pettiness and folly.

Looking once at a masterpiece, a picture of storm and rain, I said to myself: "But if you had seen that in nature, if God had given you a picture worth even in its transient beauty a thousand such as that, you would have spread your petty self across the landscape and dreaded catching cold." The clouds became to Hamlet a congregation of foul and pestilential vapors; and the whole creation is for an unredeemed humanity the slave of mean desire. There is but one skepticism, and only one, that I fear; it is the malignant doubt of God's transforming power. This is undermining our belief in the grandeur of man and of human destiny; this is postponing indefinitely the appearance of the sons of God for which

creation groans; this crucifies the Christ of our age between two thieves, Inaction and Desperation. On the one hand incarnate sloth insisting that misery is necessary, that it always has been, and always will be, a part of the world, and that there is nothing to do about it; on the other hand incarnate credulity ready for any wild experiment that promises a New Jerusalem. No! No! The manifestation of the sons of God! Therein lies the future of humanity. O that this age might strip from it this poisoned spirit of unbelief! O that it would cease to listen to them that deride as a dream the inflow of God into the soul that seeks Him. O that men would crave the spirit of adoption, the spirit that adopts God, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," until the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God.

This old world has seen much that is noble and Divine, but it has never yet seen such a company. It has seen much sacrifice, lives poured out freely, but, God knows, quite often to very little purpose. What creation groans for, what it earnestly expects is the company of the intelligent righteous, the company that thinks wisely and plans divinely and co-operates harmoniously each with the other and with the energies of nature to do the will of God.

VI.

SIMON PETER AND JUDAS ISCARIOT.

"And he [Peter] went out, and wept bitterly."—

Matt. xxvi, 75.

"And he [Judas] cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself."—Matt. xxvii, 5.

HERE are two pictures of sin and its consequences; one of them pathetic, the other terrible. Yet neither of them lies outside of the experiences of common life. Every great leader has been deserted in the crisis of his fate; treachery and betrayal have stained nearly all the great moral enterprises ever undertaken in this selfish world. And we might count ourselves a happy people if traitors were never found except among the followers of the great. But treachery and desertion have blighted many a home and ruined many a friend, have wrecked many a bank and many a business, and beggared many a widow and many an orphan, and more than one community.

Jesus when He was denied by Simon Peter shared the misfortune of thousands who have been abandoned by their friends in the hour of trial and agony. Jesus when betrayed by Judas tasted the bitterness that has poisoned lives for centuries, the bitterness of affection wasted, of kindness and forbearance spent generously for naught.

Both these men were His disciples, members of that inner circle chosen to be the daily companions of our Lord. Both of them were intimate with Him, though each in a different way. Peter had been with Him in the hour of His transfiguration; he had been, if not the first to grasp, at any rate the first to proclaim His superhuman character. Partly because of his impulsive and energetic nature, partly because of the favor of the Master he had acquired a kind of leadership among the twelve. It was not always a wise leadership, and never an undivided one. The sons of Zebedee opposed him openly, and through their mother urged their claim to highest places and superior power. Judas, on the other hand, fomented discontent among the less-favored disciples, watching eagerly to further his own schemes and to increase his opportunities. For the peculiar office of Judas brought him of necessity into very close relations with the Master. This is plain enough from

the saying of John, who tells us that when Jesus spoke to Judas the famous but pathetic words, "That thou doest, do quickly," the other disciples thought that he was to carry out some plan before agreed upon between them, to make some purchase for the feast, or to make some contribution to the poor. Judas carried the bag, but Jesus directed the use of the money. They met together and talked over the income and the outgo; what they might expect to have, and what they might expect to spend or to give away. Judas, a hard-fisted, unsentimental money-getter, had doubtless seen with rising scorn the impractical methods of the Master. He saw plainly enough abundant opportunities to exploit the popular enthusiasm and to fill the treasury of the new kingdom. That Jesus was so little practical, had so little faith in the power of money, made such poor use of fame and of His opportunities to enrich Himself and His followers, and to provide a revenue for the future, must have filled him with disappointment and chagrin. And then those quick eyes of the Master were always full of rebuke. Jesus knew him and pitied him. The words "one of you is a devil," were not words of reproach or of condemnation. They were words of tender and deep sympathy. From the beginning Jesus followed Judas

as a mother watches a crippled child. He chose for him a place of responsibility, which would of necessity bring them frequently together. In their talks about the use of money, it is easy to imagine that Jesus would reach all the secret places of His tempted disciple's heart and help him with all the wisdom and all the sweetness of His own nature. It is quite remarkable that Judas alone of all the disciples is recorded as having kissed Him. Even in the moment of betrayal Jesus calls him friend. And the undertone of quiet horror with which the evangelists refer to his treachery seems to indicate both a wonder at the patience and the long-suffering of Jesus and an unwillingness on their part to utter any condemnation other than the story of the terrible tragedy.

Peter's denial we can easily understand. His sin is on the surface. He had over-rated his strength. Just as he had leaped into the water, expecting it to be for him a solid floor, and lost his assurance when he found it yielding to his weight, so he had hurried to the high priest's palace, his heart stirred with love and curiosity and anxious perturbation. But he could no more tread the sea of danger with the calm majesty of Jesus Christ than he could tread the waves of Galilee. The consciousness of peril

unmanned him; it swept away instantly the memory of all his boasts and all his protestations, of the prophecy of Jesus and of His own self-confident rejoinder. His courage turned in a flash to cowardice; the lie came leaping to his lips; a kind of fury shook the denial and the curses from his throat; it was only a moment, but a moment of infinite timidity and meanness.

But the treachery of Judas is not an act; it is a series of thoughts and deeds. Here is both calculation and a struggle; deliberate plan and sudden impulse; the search for opportunity; the counter-balancing of motives; the selection of spot and method, and yet at the last precipitate resolve.

Clearly Judas did not expect to see his Lord condemned. The instant revulsion in his case is far more startling and terrible than in the case of Peter. Tears are always a relief, even when the strain that compels them is superhuman in its weight of misery. But the eyes of Judas are fierce and dry. Things have not gone as he expected. Jesus is unpractical to the last. As He would not convert His power and His reputation into money, so now He will not wield a carnal weapon to gain His liberty. All the warnings of his Master have come back; all the loving looks; all the urgent remonstrances; all the frank,

persistent entreaties hammer at his brain. In the bitter lamentation, "I have betrayed innocent blood," all that is meanest and all that is noblest in Judas come to light. He had sinned against knowledge and sinned against conscience; but he had sinned under the stress of an avaricious nature, under the goadings of detected shame, under the lash of cruel disappointment. But he had sinned against his only real Friend, against the only Being who loved him, the only Being who could have saved him from himself, against One who had always been gentle and forbearing with him, who, even in the agony of the betrayal, had called him friend, and had not refused to kiss him in spite of the venom on his lips.

Yet different as the denial of Peter and the betrayal of Judas are, and different as are the motives that lead up to them, they are alike in this—in showing us the limits of Christ's influence over human character. Three years these men had lived in His presence, subject to His teaching and to His personal charm, and yet both fell; one of them to rise again, one to rise no more. It is impossible to over-value a good environment. Blessed indeed are the young men who come under the magic and the majesty of pure and lofty character, of noble parents, noble teachers, noble friends. Blessed indeed are

the young women who find in the days of their power and their peril some gracious personality to weave about them the pictured possibilities of lovely and beneficent womanhood. If I complain of society, it is because society abandons itself often to leaders that think only of meaner things, of the cut and color of garments rather than the shape and splendor of the soul; of bric-a-brac and decorations, rather than the sure foundations of character; of what we eat and what we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed, rather than of the kingdom of God and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And yet, my son, even though the shadow of God be resting on your father's house and its walls be hallowed with the prayers and aspirations of a saintly mother, your feet may go astray. And you, my daughter, even though your dearest friend may be a saint, whose "eyes are homes of silent prayer" and whose speech is rich with heavenly wisdom, even then you may be secret- ing daily thoughts of a kind to ruin you, and feelings to corrode your soul. "No one becomes bad suddenly," said the Latin poet. This is saying too much, perhaps; but it is safe to say no one becomes a traitor suddenly. Treason is by its very nature perverted friendship, and that requires time. Men and women become treacherous in spite of gracious influences

and in spite of what is good in themselves. They begin with small deceits and petty subterfuges, and pass on through concealment to hypocrisy.

Judas did not expect to steal when first intrusted with the bag; no more than my friend the cashier, who robbed the bank and hanged himself. Judas began, as most men begin, by dallying with the thought. How easily it might be accomplished! Who would ever find it out? Why Jesus did not even know what money came in, nor how much He wasted in His queer charities. And then it belonged to all of them anyhow. Besides it would be easy to get the bag replenished from the enthusiasts that followed Him if Jesus would only learn the cash value of enthusiasm! Was He Messiah really? He seemed to be when He turned on Judas those solemn, searching eyes; and when He chided him with warning and remonstrance; or when He expostulated with forgiving love, and explained to him the devil that possessed him and encouraged him to fight desperately to down him. But the tempter urged him and the devil mastered him; the thought that he dallied with became desire, and desire, deed. Then the sense of guilt took hold of him; he shrank away from Jesus, murmuring: "Now He knows I am a thief, and although He feigns to confide in me, His

eyes accuse me, reproach me, sting me; I would rather He drove me from Him as a thief. But He likes to use me. I am sordid, but I am thrifty too. My speculations are small; they are poor pay for my services. With my talents for management, I might easily get rich. And if His kingdom ever comes to anything, I shall have my chance. What can these others do compared with me; they have no gifts for business. So I'll stay. The Master tells me that I have a devil; that I ought to cast him out; indeed, He offered to do it for me, if I would fast and pray and conquer this greed and selfishness. I care nothing for His predictions; they never make me shudder. But His lovingkindness often terrifies me; it is as though He would save me from some horror that hovers about me; it is as though He were goaded by some dreadful fear on my account. I have no devil; no more than Simon Peter has, who will ruin us all by his rash tongue and sudden turns. I have no devil; no more than John Zebedee, whose love is half-sentiment, half-sham. I would do more for Jesus than either of them. 'Who is to be the greatest?' they are always asking. Well, I shall hold the bag, and they shall have the glory; I shall look out for the solid benefits, and they may have the decorations. Yet Jesus disturbs me with those pierc-

ing tones and penetrating looks; I try not to listen, to think of other things, and force myself to look at Him full face. I would hate Him if I could."

And so his brain became a tumult of suspicions and alarms, of dislike and envy and misconception. For once the deed of infidelity is done, the thought of treachery takes root and spreads, the traitor begins to excuse his baseness to himself, and the readiest form of excuse is to cheapen the virtue of his companions, and to degrade in his own eyes the soul that he is betraying. "Everybody does it!" "Does Job serve God for naught?" "Jesus is a fraud; at any rate a failure, and His kingdom is a dream!" Thus muttered Judas to himself. "He charms men and enchants women and children; He does many wondrous things. But who knows? The Pharisees may not be wrong in their suspicions. Perhaps He is in league with Beelzebub—how base a thing am I become to think that thought! But suppose He founds His kingdom? Unless I have some stronger claim Peter and James and John will keep me fighting for my place. Why should He let Himself be taken if He is the Messiah; if as He claims He is the Son of God supported by the legions of heaven? And if He declares Himself with power in the moment of His arrest, why then I have planned that

very thing. What will they give me for Him? Fie! Judas, fie! No! I'll never sell Him;—although there's money in it, and big money, too."

For men when parleying with the devil are neither logical nor consistent. Ideas at once discordant and distracting dance through their minds; but only one of these ideas abides in overmastering energy, that of the contemplated wickedness. A man is not as the company he keeps; he may consort with saints, as Judas walked with Christ; he may have fellowship with Gabriel and Michael like Lucifer; but "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." When he is alone and free from the influences that benumb the devil that he harbors, then it is that he abandons himself to the tempter, preparing the volition for the finished deed by nursing the idea.

Look at Judas face to face with Jesus; the Master is discussing with him some projects of sweet charity, and the hard features reflect the Master's charm! Look at him watching the Magdalene as she breaks the box of precious ointment! Listen to the "tears in his voice" as he mentions the poor who are robbed by this sentimental waste! Does he rise to the kingly nature of Jesus? Is he entranced by the grace and dignity and power that Jesus reveals to him in every conversation? Does the Magdalene's

boundless affection thrill him to tender thoughts? For the moment, Yes! But instantly he finds himself alone, the question starts up again—How much would He bring if He were sold?

It belongs to the poet to depict these fearful encounters of the soul with Satan. And yet I question whether these pictures do much good; indeed it sometimes seems as though they did harm chiefly. The story of Gretchen's ruin, though told in rich diction and made sweet with intoxicating music, has decoyed more souls to hell than it has saved. There is a baleful contagion in crime that makes the picture of it poison. And there is a truth that teachers and parents and librarians need to remember in the lines:

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with her face
We first endure, then pity, then embrace!"

Why, then, you ask me, do you bring to us this story of avarice and treachery? Let me tell you! For thirty years and more I have been a teacher, and in that time I have been the father-confessor of many a youth. Often have I thanked God for the influence, the saving influence of parents and relatives and friends and sweethearts and for the power of Christ. But I have witnessed more than one do-

mestic tragedy where the love of mother and of sweetheart, where the father's affection and the friend's devotion and the nearness of Jesus and the striving of the Holy Ghost all failed. And I know of nothing more appalling, nothing so heartrending as this helplessness of love. The companionship of Christ could not save Judas; Satan reached and conquered him, while Jesus washed his feet and tried in vain the look that melted Peter's heart.

Rejoice, my lad, in the nobility of your father, in the gentleness of your mother, in the beauty and purity of your sweetheart, for these may help to save you in the hour of fierce trial. But remember these alone will not suffice. Rejoice, my daughter, in your home and the sweet influences that have shaped your being, rejoice in the gracious restraints and dear compulsions that are for us mortals as the arms of God. But remember these are not enough. You must fill your mind with pure thoughts and your heart with sweet intentions, lest the tempter find lodgment in the vacant place. It is not enough to be loved; you must learn to love. And your love must learn to be considerate, and ingenious, and active; not a gush of feeling, but a constant flow of caressing thought and helpful deed.

There is a teaching rife just now that is perilous

and corrosive. It is particularly dangerous because it is adulterated, poisoned truth. I mean thereby that the truth of the teaching conceals the venom that mixes subtly with it and leads to our soul's undoing. You are told that you are by nature the children of God; that the noble impulses within you are a witness of your origin, and that you need only recognize the fact of God's love to enter the kingdom of heaven. Now you *are* His children; you do serve God with the law of your minds; He does love you, and the recognition of His love is a step towards your salvation! But, my children, O my children! "There is a law in your members that wars against the law of your mind." And with your members you may become the slaves of sin and death. "For to be carnally-minded is death." Mark you, Paul says carnally-*minded*. And again he speaks of that law of the members conquering the law of the mind. There lurks the danger, this subjugation of the spirit to the flesh, this saturation of your thoughts with evil appetite and wrong desire. God loves you. Every lofty thought and brave ideal and noble aspiration is indeed a leading of His Spirit. But this love, these thoughts, these entrancing ideals will not save you. Salvation is not thought nor feeling, but life and light and love. Jesus loved Judas; Judas

knew that Jesus loved him. But the recognition of that love could not save him. And it will fail to save you. The love of the mother that prays for you night and morning, the love of the wife that would die rather than know you to be untrue, the love of the children for whom you are honor and safety, the love of friends that would pour out strength and wealth to redeem you from dishonor; all these have their limits. So also has the love of Christ and God. You must do more than recognize their love; you must love them in return, and conquer the law of your members in the strength of this affection. The love of Christ saves and perfects you only when it coaxes and constrains your soul to love Him. For the law of human life is this: He that loseth his soul in others shall find it again. You must never be content with being loved; you must love. With an affection that will not grieve nor hurt nor betray; with an affection that devises and accomplishes projects of mercy and kindness; with an affection whose watchword is that entrancing summary of God's eternal goodness: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Finally, the stories of these two disciples are instructive for another reason. Each repented. But how different the pictures; the one pathetic, the other

somber; the one troubled with the memory of the Master's power, the other with the memory of His impotence to save! The tears of Peter weeping bitterly revive the recollections that terror obliterated. The sight of Jesus led away to Pilate's judgment-seat kindled the soul of Judas into torturing flame. His clutch is on the silver; but each piece scorches him with blistering pain. The scorpions of his conscience sting him to madness. His calculating brain stands still; one crazy expedient urges him forward. Back to the chief priests and elders; back with the accursed stuff! He gave up Christ for silver; how gladly would he gather and give up silver to set free his Lord! It is all coming true; just as Jesus told him. He has done it at last; he has betrayed his Master. O why do things look so different before and after their commission? Why did his devil, how could his desire blind him so? "I have betrayed innocent blood!" With hot and hungry eyes he faces the hypocrites that hired him. "What is that to us? See thou to that!" is the sullen reply. Down with the pieces of silver; out from the sanctuary; away from the chief priests and the elders; anywhere, anywhere, away from himself! "Whither he goes is hell; himself is hell!"

Why did he not rush to Jesus and find help in His

forgiving love? Jesus is with Pilate; the soldiers guard the entrance to the governor's hall. He can but perish in the attempt. And one look of that sweet face were worth his life. Shall he seek for Peter and John? Peter might help him in his misery; but Judas had not seen Peter weeping over his denial. The Boanerges might scourge him from His presence, for there were depths of wrath in him! Pilate has condemned Jesus. Will Jesus die? Why not wait to see the end, perhaps a burst of power? Peter waited; in spite of his denial and his cowardice, the memory of Christ kept hold of him; his hope and love survive. But Judas could not wait. He had no hope. If the Master were to come down from the cross and establish His throne in the face of His enemies there would be no place for him, so Judas thought. For this is the worst of human meanness, it destroys all faith in magnanimity. O why, why did he not suffer Jesus to cast that devil out? Then instead of clutching pennies and contriving small deceits and plotting treachery, he would have loved His Master to some purpose. For granting that he had a devil, granting that he like many a man was loaded down from the beginning with a greedy, suspicious, violent nature; Jesus had explained all that and offered him His own and His Father's help. But he would not!

And even now, if he had only known, all was not lost. Even now he could follow the crowd and fling himself at the foot of the Cross and give the world a picture of forgiveness more beautiful than that of the repentant thief. For He that spoke comfort to the malefactor, He that prayed forgiveness for His enemies, He would have soothed the misery of Judas, if he had crawled towards Him and risked his life for one last loving look. Alas! Alas! Men who suffer the evil one to blind their eyes to the grandeur and beauty of love never can measure its value in the hour and article of despair! "He went and hanged himself!" Why do treachery and infidelity terminate so frequently in suicide? Is it that the traitor's eyes are holden so that he never sees the baseness of the deed until it is done and is reflected from every face that he beholds? Or is it not rather that in the hour of discovery he finds himself bereft of faith in man and faith in God, expecting his beloved to reproach him and his children to rise up and cry, "Accursed!" and Christ Himself to hide His face in wrath? I do not know. I do not care to consider. I should, though, if every traitor hanged himself. But the modern Judas flaunts his treason in our faces and stalks around without a twinge of conscience or a touch of penitence. He gilds his

wickedness with euphemisms; he has fine names for his ugly deeds; and never lacks defenders and idolaters.

“Judas went and hanged himself.” And now we speak of him as the arch-traitor of humanity. We confuse the grandeur of the victim with the meanness of the treachery; and so make Judas worse than men of equal greed and far less sensibility. For no trait of modern avarice is more diabolical than its callous indifference to the woe that it causes and the ruin in its track.

“Judas went and hanged himself.” He shrank from the light of the sun and the memory of his Master’s face. But you that listen to me! If you shall ruin the innocent or devour widows’ houses; if you shall for pelf, be it paltry or colossal, betray the friend or the community that trusts you; if you, surrounded by ministries of tender affection and living in the shadow of Jesus Christ, if you shall make havoc of your homes; if you, who have known the touch of the Master and seen the light of His eyes, shall betray His cause in the midst of a doubting and perverse generation; then you must take your place with Judas, even though like him you have kissed the Lord of Life and Glory.

VII.

THE JOY OF JESUS.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."—John xv, 11.

WHY do we think of God so seldom as the author of joy? We are ready enough to arraign Him as the author of our griefs and the source of our miseries. By phrases like "the dispensations of His providence" we always mean something disagreeable, painful, and distressing. When we talk of His sovereignty, the shadow of Him fills the sky with dread; when we talk of His commandments, they seem to lift themselves like mountain peaks that human feet can not scale; the marvels of His administration excite in us no enthusiasm; we shudder at the knowledge of His power, the sweep of His authority, the infinitely various displays of His intelligence and energy. But we do not praise Him as the source of our delights. May it not be possible that this conception of God is wholly wrong, and in itself the cause of gloom? Is there not in the

text a suggestion, at any rate, that the Divine purpose includes not merely our perfection in righteousness, but our perfection in joy? Does not the Infinite Father plan for the gladness as well as the holiness of His children? Is it not a kind of blasphemy to think of Him as satisfied with somber-visaged servants, prompt to answer every demand of a sensitive conscience, firm even to fierceness in the performance of difficult duty, ready to pluck out the right eye or to cut off the right hand to do His will; but with no songs on their lips, no smiles on their faces, no merriment in their hearts, no moments of rapturous gladness in their lives? Once we raise this question fairly, the sayings of Jesus about blessedness and joy come trooping to our minds, insisting on their proper place in our ideals of life. We see that He is a teacher and a bringer of gladness; that when He took upon Him our weakness and our sorrows He took upon Him an alien experience; that the heart of Christ is joy, deep, abiding, satisfying joy. His precepts, His examples, His daily companionships, His final sacrifice, His power over life and death—all had for their ultimate purpose the development in His disciples of a consummate bliss, a Divinely-sweet contentment, the glory of a great and indestructible gladness.

"*Deus vult*," God wills it! cried the Crusader as he rushed to battle under the impulse of wild enthusiasm. He was all wrong in thus mistaking the fire of barbarous feeling, the ecstasy of savage excitement for a wave of Divine command. And so in every epoch and in every corner of the planet men have raised their cry of "*Deus vult*," *God wills it*, over this and the other enterprise, over this and the other requirement born of their own folly, their own misconception, their own ignorance, their own excitement.

But the real *Deus vult*, the real will of God, is that we should move forward steadily to the discovery of knowledge and the attainment of holiness, and, above all, to the possession of abiding joy.

Having grasped this thought of God in Jesus Christ, note in the next place that the joy of Christ is not merely negative. It does not consist wholly in the absence of pain, or hindrance, or sorrow. Joy is not incompatible with grief. The short ministry of Jesus is startling with incidents of agony. The Wilderness, Gethsemane, and Calvary mark for us the highest reach of human suffering. For in all of them we see that combination of physical wretchedness and mental torture which taxes human endurance to the utmost. But "for the joy that was set

before Him" this Man of Sorrows "endured the Cross, despising the shame." That is to say, joy and misery were concurrent possibilities and concurrent realities in the life of Jesus Christ. Transfiguration and Crucifixion belong to the same wonderful career; the garden of the sepulcher was also the garden of the resurrection, and over against the weakness of Peter and the treachery of Judas stood the strengthening angels of the Living God. And well for us that it was so! For the tendency of modern thought, both in our science and our literature, is to make happiness nothing but a sense of well-being dependent upon certain physical conditions. Burns's "Jolly Beggars" or his "Tam O'Shanter,"

"Glorious
O'er all the ills of life victorious,"

give us vivid, fleeting, enticing, but delusive pictures of this well-being. And the ideally perfect human animal, of whom the philosophy of the future never tires of prating, is to be its permanent incarnation. Now I suspect that this ideally perfect animal of the future is only an inverted myth. Yet I do not despise him as a useful expectation, for it is folly to scoff at any kind of perfection, and only a dunce in

our day neglects the blood of his heart or the cells of his brain.

But hitherto the magnificent human animal has not always had a good time in the world. Goethe was a magnificent human animal, and so was Daniel Webster; the one as splendidly formed as any creature in Europe, the other the astonishment of all who saw him. The German poet has given us his experiences in many shapes, conspicuously in *Faust*. And what has this excellent human animal to say? Just what another splendid creature whined out to the world many centuries ago: "Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit."

And the American statesman with a bottle of Madeira under his yellow waistcoat, but looking like Jupiter, may be a pretty sight for an essay-writer; but he is a gloomy portent for that era of magnificent animals when men shall be born to happiness as the sparks are to fly upwards. Shall we then give up the quest for happiness, and crawl disappointed to our graves? Or shall we look for other sources of joy than are to be found in blood and muscle?

To us who must face to-morrow and its tasks with shattered nerves and enfeebled organs your gospel of the magnificent animal is, I confess, an inefficient medicine and a worthless stimulant. It

fails us when we are weary; it mocks us when we are sick; it taunts us at the bedside of our beloved; and stares at us pitilessly from the eyes of our dead when we close them in helpless mercy to ourselves.

I come back, therefore, to my proposition: what we need is a joy concurrent with our trouble, our weariness, our care, our sorrow. And such was the joy of Jesus Christ. And the elements of it are not difficult to discover and to state.

I. THERE IS THE JOY OF MANIFEST DESTINY;
and

II. THE JOY OF ADEQUATE STRENGTH.

I. Even Marcus Aurelius saw that life without a definite purpose must prove a misery. But I mean something sublimer than having a purpose in life. Not that having a distinct purpose is to be decried or underrated. Liszt told his parents that he would make them rich by his music, and he did far more. Correggio's exclamation, "I, too, am a painter," started him on a great career; so did Paganini's determination to exhaust the possibilities of the violin, and Cavour's resolve to be Prime Minister of a united Italy. These purposes, however, were in accord with the temperament and desires of those who had them. But a destiny may conflict with one's disposition and cherished hopes; it may be repugnant

to one's nature; it may be, and is often, a demand for renunciation and sacrifice and hardship, and for the endurance of bodily and mental suffering.

The task and environment of Jesus were alien to His nature; but He accepted both as the appointment of Infinite Wisdom, as the requirement of Infinite Love. He set about the thing He did, not because He liked to do it, but because there was no other way of fulfilling His Father's will. The cry of Gethsemane is the concentration of many a prayer, "Let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." Contrast now the scene in Gethsemane with the Transfiguration, and you will understand what I mean by the joy of manifest destiny. For in that moment of splendor "the decease that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem" looms up distinct and clear. But in spite of it, the mountain-top glows with the glory of the future, and the valleys echo with the voice of the Father proclaiming, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It was the moment in which the God within Him and the God without Him met in rapturous accord. This is the meaning of that magnificent picture in the Letter to the Hebrews, in which Jesus takes up the language of the Psalmist, "Lo, I come, I come to do Thy will, O God!" And the

meaning of the still more beautiful picture of Him: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It may be that such a moment of transfiguration was possible to Him alone; or possible at most to the heroic spirits whose appointed destinies involve great burdens, and therefore require these great compensations. But I am fain to believe that there are such moments of great joy for all of us who are walking humbly with our God. Few of us, perhaps, may see as Jesus saw so clearly the outcome, the triumphant outcome of effort and obedience; but for all of us I am persuaded God has moments when we may catch glimpses of the value of our work and of its relation to some higher scheme of things; moments when our work-a-day garments shine with a brightness whiter than any fuller can give them; moments when God Himself tells us that we are in the right way, that we are parts of a great plan and instruments of a great progress, that we shall triumph certainly over drudgery and difficulty and disappointment, that we shall accomplish finally, not indeed what we have wished, but what the All-wise Father has willed. And such moments are replete with joy.

Nay, I go further. God gives to many a one glimpses of larger life and diviner achievement; and these to whom He offers them fail of happiness because they are disobedient to the heavenly vision. We hear of those who, like Moses and Paul, yield to the Divine enchantment; but we seldom hear of those like Balaam who see and then resist. How many there be that start out in life with larger ideals and unusual powers, doing at first the things they wish to do, their wishes carrying them easily and rapidly towards fine achievement, but who succumb to glittering temptations or flinch at obstacles, and refuse to make great sacrifice! Read, for instance, Ticknor's description of young Daniel Webster at the delivery of the Plymouth oration. One feels in reading it that God was offering to this wonderful child of the granite hills a possible destiny that any of His angels might have envied. But in moments of temptation Webster forgot, and in other moments disobeyed the heavenly vision. He could not conquer himself. He could not cling to the ideals of the Salisbury farmhouse, the ideals of his Puritan ancestors, so that great as were the achievements of orator and statesman, we are compelled to know him as a disappointed man. He descended from the mount of transfiguration, where Ticknor beheld him

with adoring wonder not to work the miracles of a giant statesman serving his country by serving God, but rather to become the disfigured angel of our national history, somber, morose, rejected, the shadow of a vast splendor, but the shadow also of a mightier possibility which, if realized, would have filled him with divine joy.

Or look at Thomas Carlyle. He had his visions, too; some of them most glorious. He ought to have been a happy man. But, then, he must have conquered by God's grace his temper and his circumstances. Few men have worked so bravely; few men, though, have ever murmured so continually. Every day he went grumbling to a task that he loathed. I surely would not blame him for wishing to spend his strength in deeds rather than in words, in projects of tangible kindness and visible mercy, for I have often the same feeling of the impotence of speeches and sermons and books. But Carlyle's creed, small as it was, required him to accept his destiny with joy; to use the beautiful words of St. Paul, to finish his course with joy. He was appointed, he believed, to rally his fellow-men to their daily labors as to tasks allotted by Divine decree; to call them away from wasted effort and vain re-pining to fruitful and beneficent activity. How

could he succeed unless he accepted his own lot with cheerful expectation? Because activities such as he craved were denied him, why must he go about the thing that he was compelled to do (and which he did grandly) with groans and melancholy? Why could not he also finish his splendid course with joy? Because, so at least it seems to me, he never learned of Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart, and he never accepted his destiny with faith and hope. Compare the stalwart Scotchman with the sufferer from Tarsus; both were men of great vitality, and both had thorns in the flesh and thorns in the spirit. Paul had his aches and his ailments, his bruises and his dismal turns; he, too, was buffeted by man and by Satan, by contradiction and perversity and folly and every form of human ugliness and hindrance. Yet what a blast of triumph he trumpets in the face of his tormentor! "Most gladly, therefore, will I gather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Over Carlyle this tortured little preacher of the first century had only one advantage. It was this: For Paul the compulsion of circumstances was the will of God; in them was manifest his destiny; and in the power of his great Commander he might organize victory from the shreds of his strength. He

might have moped and murmured; he might have sulked and surrendered; but he had learned wisdom in the school of Christ. He had entered into the heart of that amazing life; rather the heart of that amazing life had entered into him. Not easily; not all at once; but finally he climbed the steep and saw the splendor. God was for him; who could be against him? Every blotch upon his face, every quiver of his trembling eyelids had significance and power; so, too, had every incident of his career.

For his comrades in the school of Gamaliel his life might seem a willful ruin; for his contemporaries like Festus and Agrippa he was at best an inspired lunatic; nor was his life even what he had pictured it to himself when all alone with Christ in the mountains of Arabia, for it looked at times both incoherent and inconsequential, a group of stirring incidents and scattered friendships, a tangled skein of triumph and disaster. Yet in the times that tried his soul his eyes grew large and luminous with joy; past and future blended into perfect harmony; over his head, as over that of Jesus, broke the voice of the Father, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." "Bear," says the stoic philosopher, "bear the unavoidable with dignity." No! says Jesus Christ, bear it with a calm, invincible delight;

for if it is unavoidable it is the will of God. This compulsion of circumstances is the hand of infinite love and infinite intelligence; He lays His hand upon you, and besets you behind and before. If He lets you go on your way, rejoice! If He makes you go His way, rejoice also, even though your naked feet are cut with stones, even though your aching limbs grow faint and feeble. "For thy way is not hid from the Lord, and thy judgment is not passed over of thy God." "The vision is for an appointed time; if it tarry wait for it; it will surely come." Some one objects, though: "This may be true enough for those like St. Paul, who have great tasks allotted them in the economy of God. My place in creation is too small. You can not soothe me, much less thrill me, with your big word, Destiny. The joy you make so much of, has for me no value and no meaning." Now, this is hardly true. No words are more abused than great and small. There is profound wisdom in Paul's declaration that "the weak things of this world are chosen to confound the mighty and the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are." He was himself an instance of it. The ACTA DIURNA, the daily journal of the Roman Empire, never mentioned *him*. He was too small for notice. But within him dwelt the

consciousness of power and over him flashed the gleams of a splendid foreboding. Like him we can never go wrong in thinking nobly of the task appointed us; the issues of our labors are with God, and He alone knows the relation of them to His vast administration.

“Thousands at His bidding speed
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Whether one is bidden to speed or to stand, the one sure thing is this: the life that is hid with Christ in God can not be an aimless one. The eternal energy sustains, the eternal wisdom vindicates it. This explains, I think, the gladness of the early Christians. Paul’s rapturous cry, “Rejoice, again I say, Rejoice!” found eager response among those who felt themselves laborers together with God. The world they knew to be passing away with the lust thereof. But they were doing the will of God, and were destined to abide forever!

II. This brings us to the second proposition about the joy of Jesus: There was in Jesus Christ the consciousness of a power adequate to every emergency of life. And such a consciousness once established in the soul is a source of indescribable satisfaction. The young and the healthy have a natural

consciousness of power; they in their ignorance of life laugh with exultation and eager certainty. O they are going to conquer for themselves a merry life! Where are the dragons too strong for them to subdue? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." For how brief is our youth! How swift to come are the days of sorrow! How urgent the demands upon our strength, if we must work! How exasperating the drain upon our health, if we are doomed to play! "A mad world, my masters," commented Shakespeare, and he knew every phase of it. Mad in the aimless rush of its activities, mad in its gloomy and clumsy devices for amusement, mad in its hypocrisies of wisdom, maddest of all in its conflicts of desire. And we are not slow to discover its madness and our weakness; its tremendous drafts upon our energies and the scantiness of our supply. We measure ourselves against the tasks of to-day and the demands of to-morrow, only to shrink at the result. We run with the footmen and they weary us, and we wonder how we shall contend with the horsemen. And the swellings of Jordan rumble

in our ears long before the clouds have filled themselves with rain! Foresight is beclouded with foreboding; the future darkened with anxiety and fear.

Nevertheless Jesus confronted this mad and tiresome world with a quiet sanity that even at this distance fills us with unutterable calm. Behold Him as He stands among His enemies with His watchword, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This is no divine darling, no child of eternal leisure, no celestial idler playing among the sons of men. This is the Son of God the Mighty, and of Jehovah the Eternal. He has accepted the compulsion of circumstances as the will of God; but He is claiming with it His eternal birthright, power enough to do His work and to finish His sublime enterprise.

Goethe once discovered in his grandson's album some sentimental nonsense of Jean Paul. "We have," so ran the melancholy sentence, "we have only three instants; one in which we are born, one in which we live, and half a second in which to die." "Let the boy bethink him," wrote the wise old man, "let the boy bethink him that every hour has its sixty minutes and every day its twenty-four hours; and let him cheer himself reflecting how much he can accomplish every single day." Here was a lesson learned from the Sermon on the Mount and

from the life of Jesus Christ. For we never see Jesus weighing Himself against His task and finding either His strength or His time too short! Surely there must be an unutterable joy in the consciousness that one is adequate to all the necessities of one's career. Mark you, I do not say adequate to all that one may wish to do or all that others may wish to have one do. Jesus had no fire with which to burn Samaritan villages, because the Sons of Thunder were in wrath; He had no strength to found a kingdom such as even Jewish patriots craved; but He discovered strength with a great joy whenever blind eyes besought Him for His healing touch, and when the home at Bethany was darkened with that sorrow of death that none of us escape.

Whether you and I will live to carry out our plans, whether we shall get the things achieved, on which we set our hearts—who in all the world can tell? Even the grandeur of our purposes, were they tenfold more magnificent than they are, would hardly guarantee us their fulfillment. But of one thing we children of God may rest assured. So long as we and our plans are necessary to that sublime event towards which the whole creation moves, so long we shall renew our strength. Or to put it much more simply, the thing that is really necessary for

our beloved, the thing that is really necessary for those we fain would help and God would prosper, that thing you and I are going to get finished; for that thing our powers will prove fully equal; even our weakness will help us to get that done. O! if you have never known a crisis in which the hidden fountains of your being burst into sudden energy, when in the urgency of a great duty or in the joy of a great purpose you felt yourself allied to all the majesty of God, why then I can not make you understand these words of Jesus Christ! For it is only in such moments that death becomes a shadow and life alone seems real. It is only in such moments that "the power of an endless life" ceases to be a phrase and becomes a glorious fact. Then it is that the soul is filled with calm defiance of all possible disaster; then it is that the conscience grows omnipotent; then it is that God becomes alive and nearer than the sky; then it is that all things are for our sakes; the flowers at our feet and the stellar clusters of the firmament, the birds that sing in the sunshine, and the worlds that roll in light, the breath of zephyr and the blast of storm-wind, the march of nations and the majesty of everlasting law, all our servants and all our treasures, for then indeed are we become the sons of God!

VIII.

THE JOY OF JESUS.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."—John xv, 11.

Joy, I said to you last Sunday, was the birth-right of Jesus; not incompatible with sorrow and grief, but stronger in Him than either of them. I pointed out to you then two elements of this enduring and triumphant joy; first His consciousness of ultimate destiny; and, secondly, His consciousness of a strength adequate to any emergency of His career. I come now to other elements equally obvious and equally important; viz., the joy of an unstained memory, the joy of anticipated beneficence, and the joy of ownership.

I. Which of you, said Jesus when the contention between Him and the Pharisees made them thirsty for His life, which of you convicteth Me of sin? A question like this on the lips of some men might indicate more pride than peace; a defiant challenge

rather than a happy conscience; an overbearing haughtiness, rather than a mind full of blissful recollections and of gladsome plans. But the purity of Jesus was blended with a touching humility. He fought a desperate battle in the Wilderness to maintain it; yet He never flaunted it and never bragged about it. Every word and every act of His life flowed forth from the unstained, unsullied fountains of conscious integrity and conscious rectitude; but how free from arrogance He was! How tender towards the erring! How forbearing with every form of weakness save hypocrisy alone!

Now this joy of a pure conscience is perhaps intenser, because diviner, than any other known to us. And it is re-enforced continually by every increase of our knowledge and our power. The youth who conquers his first great temptation hardly knows the meaning of his victory; the sense of delight that comes to him fortifies his soul, but it is only a harbinger of future delights and future revelations. As time goes by the relation of that early triumph to his after conduct becomes distinct and plain, and the relation of it to all subsequent events fills him with sweet surprise and invigorating wonder. On the other hand,

“’T is conscience doth make cowards of us all.”

And what a kill-joy is this wretched cowardice! But what if there be no evil deeds to remember? What if the stream of recollection flow on in the mind innocent and untainted? Then surely we do not hide away our own memories, nor shrink from the shadows of our own experience.

Of the childhood of Jesus the record is indeed scant; the story of His visit to Jerusalem and the Temple, of His obedience at Nazareth, and of His favor with God and man! Brief, indeed; but very beautiful! This swift and powerful hold on His Father's business, this cheerful subjection to the narrowness of His Nazarene home, this radiance of affection shed upon all with whom He talked, must have made Him the loveliest figure of the Galilean town. What He remembered of His youth in later years we can conjecture only; but what He did *not* remember we can tell quite easily. He remembered no bitter words of disobedience or strife, no outbreaks of jealousy or hate, no treacheries or stratagems, no ruin wrought in others by sudden impulse or by cold deceit, no surrender to Satan, no betrayal of God. Tempted on all points like as we are, yet without sin. How overwhelming is the meaning of such perfect triumph! For the stream of recollection scorches too often like fire or bites

into our strength like furious acid. What a picture is that of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep and rubbing her little hand! She who was strong enough to control her thoughts in her waking moments is in her dreams the tortured and helpless victim of the dreadful spot that will not wash away.

Does some one among you look at me furtively as if to say, "Why smite me thus, me in my misery, when you promised me to speak of joy?" I make a twofold answer. First, my words are partly for the young and innocent; for the boy whose soul is yet untainted, for the girl whose mind is yet unstained. To them I make my appeal. My son, my daughter, do not fill your memories with evil thoughts and bitter recollections! It is easy to commit sin; it is hard to forget it, and impossible to destroy its consequences. They hide themselves in the depths of your being, to break in upon you after many years; they bury themselves in your surroundings, and rise again to smite you with a terrible surprise. Once your brain is poisoned with the recollection of wrongdoing, all your thoughts will show the fatal tinge. Your enterprises may prosper, your latent powers lift you to pinnacles that you did not dare to covet and to possibilities that to some purer being might be almost divine. But just at the mo-

ment that you are girding yourself to some supreme exertion, Satan will trip you with the shadow of your sinful past, and beat you back and beat you down to baser things.

II. But then I say to you, my fellow culprit, for you and for me this only now remains—so to fill our minds with thoughts of life as to crowd away these specters of the past. The innocence of our childhood is gone forever. We may no longer climb the hills with boyish glee, or count the stars that struggle through the twilight with eyes unspotted by the sense of guilt. The distance from the tree-tops to the sky has lengthened for us, and the angels are no longer playing with us hide-and-seek either in the forest or in the firmament. And in their places other forms appear, instances of our own lives caught by the photographic power of conscience and kept alive to haunt us. What shall we do? What can we do? We must rejoice in vivid purposes of mercy, in vivid plans of lovingkindness, in clearly outlined enterprises into which we may pour the remnant of our energies. And so when Satan comes to trip us with the memories of the past we can beat him back and beat him down with the realities of the present and the purposes of the future. The art of forgetting, the extinction and

destruction of evil ideas and tormenting recollections consists in crowding down and crowding out the evil with the good; in crowding out the corrosive recollection with the noble purpose, in chasing away the shadow of sinful realities with noble dreams that we are daily turning into realities. "He went about doing good!" How sweet that sounds, and yet how simple! But be not led astray. Jesus was not a sublime vagrant, sauntering through Galilee on chance excursions of benevolence. His was a deliberate life; each day crowded to the edge with purposes to be fulfilled. His disciples were to be trained; the lost were to be sought and to be saved; Samaritan and Gentile were to be reached; the foundations of the kingdom of God were to be laid. He, like the most of us, had one chief absorbing task; into that He poured the energy of His perfect mind as well as the energy of His indomitable will. But around that central task clustered many opportunities for kindness, always embraced eagerly because always anticipated so gladly. If then we may not rejoice like Him in an unblemished past, in unsullied and untainted recollections, we may at any rate resemble Him in this, that we too rejoice in prospective ministries of mercy, in the cup of cold water that we shall give in the name of the dis-

ciple, in the daily forecast of generous deeds that we mean to do before the sun goes down.

Thus, and thus only, can the succession of our thoughts become a stream of gladness. We must lose ourselves to save ourselves; not forgetting at all the central task assigned to us as our ultimate destiny, but combining with it even in our busiest moments and our severest thinking a prompt and generous and ubiquitous helpfulness. Then, I repeat, the stream of our thoughts will be a stream of gladness; within us a fountain of sweet anticipation, and without us an ever-ripening fruitage of sweet realities.

III. But another kind of joy quite manifest in Jesus, was the joy of ownership. This may indeed sound strange when we recall His famous saying, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Or when we recall the statement of St. Paul, "Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." It is, however, the same paradox which Paul himself delighted in. As sorrowful, yet rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. The jurist when he comes to define ownership, defines it in his miser-

able, negative way; the power to exclude others from the enjoyment of the thing possessed. But a Divine reason sees clearly enough that only what we enjoy do we possess, and what we do not enjoy we do not and can not possess in any but the pitiful legal sense. Of some men and women it were far truer to say that they are owned by their lands and their shops, by their houses and their horses, by their pictures and their porcelain, by their books and their bonds, than to speak of them as owning anything whatever.

Jesus, however, moves before us, absolutely owner of His world. The lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the mountain slopes of Galilee, the sparrows that fall to the ground, the waving harvests ready for the sickle, the ripening clusters in the vineyards, the falling rain, the wind that bloweth where it listeth, the clouds that redden the evening sky, the living waters gushing from the rocks, the shadows that chase each other across the placid lake, the sunshine bathing Olivet in splendor,—these all belonged to Him, all wrought together for His happiness as they wrought for no one else in all the world. He was in a mansion of His Father's house, and every nook and cranny of it gave Him pleasure.

Schiller, the German poet, wrote a famous poem called "The Gods of Greece," deploring the emptiness of Nature as we know it. Science, he lamented, has reduced the sun to a fiery ball which men can weigh and measure; science has scared the nymph from the fountains and the dryads from the forests; the billows now are breaking into lifeless foam and the stars are smothered into everlasting silence. But who ever thinks of an empty sky when he walks and talks with Jesus? How sublimely silent He is about the utilities of Nature; how sublimely inspiring and instructive when He deals with Nature as the symbol of His Father's mind and heart! His enjoyment is something richer than the delight in color and in form; in symmetry of structure and variety of hue; in the surprises of sunlight and the stir of creature life; in the gurgling of waters or the murmur of the breeze. He is in His Father's house. These things belong to Him. These things were meant for Him. Wide as may be the sweep of their influence, many and various as may be their utilities, they are there also for His sake, to be the ministers of His peace and joy.

Now if Nature has for us no such joyful ministry, the reason does not lie in the central task that our ultimate destiny requires of us. What is any

task of ours compared with His? What is any struggle of ours or any sorrow of ours compared with His temptation and His agony?

Wordsworth's sonnet tells us where the reason lies:

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Spending and getting we lay waste our powers."

We do not take time to look about us and see what we possess. And thus we gain the world and lose the joy of life.

But not only did He thus own Nature; Jesus was the owner of every home He entered and every synagogue in which He prayed, of the Temple at Jerusalem and all the oracles of God. For of these He knew the uses, and these He made subservient to His will. We enter now and then a home which seems to belong to us at once, so gracious is the welcome, so unrestrained and charming is the hospitality. An atmosphere of freedom fills our lungs and stirs our blood; our thoughts leap swiftly to the surface; we lose all fear of awkwardness; and a resurrection of our nobler self surprises us with unexpected power. But now and then our own homes are entered by a guest who creates them for us all anew, so radiant is the soul he brings, so rich is he in all the arts of joy. The pictures have a

new meaning, the books a new charm; he breathes into every household word the magic of his being, and makes everything about him an instrument of pleasure; and when he vanishes we know for the time that while he was with us our home belonged to him in a sense that it never had belonged to ourselves.

Just such a guest was Jesus as I conceive Him among His friends at Capernaum, or in the precious home at Bethany. See Martha standing yonder, her cheeks all flushed with eager service, glad to show her love as best she can. See her kindly smile, and listen to her mock reproach, "Lord, bid my sister come and help me!" "Nay, Martha, nay! why all this fuss and industry for Me! Come thou rather to thy sister here, and let us talk together of the kingdom. This surely is the better part."

Now, few of us may carry with us such a grace and such a joy. But surely we can enter the homes that are open to us in something of His spirit. Is not my neighbor's garden mine when the glory of the flowers greets and gladdens my weary brain? Are not his trees mine when the foliage of them fringed with raindrops glistens with imprisoned rainbows in the returning sunshine?

When I was a boy we were very poor, and proud

as we were poor. But I had one great possession in which I exulted almost fiercely. It was the fountain in Franklin Square. To this day, when in Philadelphia, my heart leaps up at sight of the spot where I used to stand and watch the watery columns break high up in the air. For that I used to feel was mine! Foolish child! the sky above my head and all the stars were mine; so too was all the wisdom of the ages, if I only roused myself to seek it; and many homes were there to welcome me, if I were only worthy of the welcome; gracious women to cheer me on, and strong men ready to call me friend. How rich I was, poor, little fool; only I did not know it, and that made me poor indeed! But Jesus knew and understood how rich He was, and therefore His exceeding joy.

Add to these sources of His joy another kind of ownership, the full possession of Himself. Many men are slaves of their own genius: witness Julius Cæsar, or Charles XII of Sweden, or the poet Burns. But Jesus owned Himself; wielded surely every power of mind and body, making all obedient to His destiny. He is choosing serenely even when He seems to be compelled, and He gives Himself away because He owns Himself so absolutely. There is, I know, a rapture in the sweep of sudden

passion, in the rush and tumult of ungoverned impulse; but there is degradation also. The bliss of Jesus is altogether different. He goes about proclaiming, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and He suffers any beggar on the highway to challenge Him make good His word. He gave His strength quite consciously and gladly; without grudging or wincing at necessary pain or flinching from ingratitude or misconception. Not Herod with his cunning or Pilate with his legions could force Him to display His power or utter an unwilling word, and the clamors of the mob break powerless against this majesty of self-possession.

And here again I think we fail. We never quite possess ourselves. We shrink from criticism or from crucifixion, and dare not do the thing we ought. Some splendid vision stands before us beckoning us to sacrifice and grand endeavor. The will of God within us urges us to find and exercise our highest powers; to rise beyond the sordid expectations of the meaner minds about us, and to realize the thought and plans of God. But we falter and fall back. Seeking to save our lives we lose them, and miss our highest destiny and richest joy. For us the hour never comes, the hour in which we lift our eyes to heaven as Jesus did, and say, "I have

glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do," the hour in which we gather our beloved ones about us and say, "O righteous Father, I have known these, and these have known that Thou hast sent me." For it is only into such a soul, so self-possessed and yet so self-suppressed, that God makes entrance with His glory. Judas might betray Him, Peter might deny Him, John might falter and fall back, and all the rest take flight; nay, His physical strength might break beneath the awful pressure, and the misery of pain and weakness come to make His task appear impossible; yet listen to Him as He rises from the arms of God to face His bitter trial; see Him as He stands before the Council in the grandeur of His integrity; watch Him as His loving eyes fix themselves on Peter's face; behold Him in majestic silence before the eager Herod ready to release Him for a miracle; study Him in His interview with Pilate! He is everywhere serenely conscious of His destiny and dignity; He is always sure of Himself and sure of God.

He saved others, but *Himself* He can not save! Such was the mocking cry of His revilers. How pitiful their misconception! He alone of all men saved *Himself*. He alone carried back His soul un-

tainted and unshattered to the Father whence He came. He alone of all men lifted up the standard that has ever since inspired them that work for righteousness, nourished them that believe in human possibilities and human progress. "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do."

O Father, glorify us also, that we too may glorify Thee! Help us to keep our souls unspotted; make us at home in the world where Thou hast placed us, and at home with each other, adding daily to each other's happiness. Give us possession of ourselves, that we may do Thy will and finish with joy the work Thou hast given us to do. Do not desert us in our griefs or abandon us in our weakness, but sustain us with Thy presence and rejoice us with the increase of our strength, we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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